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APRIL



"The architect spent so much time trying to understand how we live. He created a home while creating a beautiful house. It's not easy to get those both right."

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ROBB REPORT'S ULTIMATE HOME 2015, BY LANDRY DESIGN GROUP; PHOTOGRAPHY BY ERHARD PFEIFFER



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April iPad Bonus Feature

Miami Heat

South Florida's real estate market is sizzling, thanks in part to a new wave of design-focused residential developments from Ritz-Carlton and other top hospitality brands. BY PAUL RUBIO

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Refuge and Ruins

SOME AMBITIOUS HOMES are constructed to shelter their occupants; others are conceived to shelter their owners' ambitions. In the early 19th century, many such shrines to dynastic aspiration rose in the Southern United States—nowhere more prolifically than in the town of Natchez, Miss. Yet by the 20th century, most of these antebellum monuments existed merely as memorials to lost fortunes and ruined lives. In the summer of 1932, two such once-proud places served as suitable settings for a tragedy that made headlines from New Orleans to New York.



In the summer of 1932, two once-proud places served as suitable settings for a tragedy that made headlines from New Orleans to New York.

On the evening of August 4, the Natchez sheriff's phone rang. "You'd better come quick," said the caller. "I'm afraid something terrible has happened." When the authorities arrived at Glenburnie, an elegant plantation house, they found overturned chairs, broken glass, and a trail of blood leading onto the veranda—but no sign of the home's resident, a 68-year-old woman. Not until dawn did the search party uncover in the woods a barefoot body clad in a gore-soaked dress. As *Time* magazine reported, the discovery suggested "the morbid melodramas of Mississippi author William Faulkner who specializes in social decay amid evil surroundings."

The victim, Jennie Merrill, was an aristocratic and eccentric recluse. Born in 1864 in a sprawling mansion known as Elms Court (pictured), she was the daughter of Ayers Merrill Jr., a Harvard-educated diplomat, and Jane Surget, a Natchez belle. During the Civil War, her father managed to preserve the family's property by opening his doors to Union officers—a gesture that earned him the enmity of his neighbors and the gratitude of General Ulysses S. Grant, who subsequently appointed him the U.S. ambassador to Belgium. When illness forced Merrill's father to resign, she returned with him to Elms

Court, where she remained until his death in 1883. Although she inherited an immense fortune in cash and property, Merrill sold Elms Court and moved to Glenburnie, where she withdrew from society.

Her sole companion was a cousin, Duncan Minor, who rode each night on horseback to her home and remained there until morning. On his final visit, he stumbled upon the gruesome scene and phoned the sheriff.

Merrill's cousin had reason to suspect that the inhabitants of Glenwood, a neighboring manor, played a part in her death. Its owner, Richard Henry Clay Dana, had studied music in New York, where he aspired to become a concert pianist. His career, however, ended when a window came down on his right hand, crushing his fingers. Back in Natchez, he enjoyed the company of Octavia Dockery, a penniless relation of Jefferson Davis who wrote poetry. Dana welcomed her at Glenwood, but his inheritance soon slipped through his broken fingers. The mansion's ornate rooms filled with debris, and the property's goats wandered the halls, chewing the upholstery. When these caprine intruders ventured onto the grounds of Glenburnie, Merrill angrily shot one. The incident led to a legal dispute that inspired a newspaper to dub Glenwood "Goat Castle."

When the sheriff came to question him the night of the murder, Dana was washing a bloody shirt. Following his and Dockery's arrest, the press anxiously awaited the trial and its promise of macabre details. Reporters, however, were disappointed: Months after the discovery of Merrill's body, Arkansas police shot a man named George Pearls who wielded a .32-caliber pistol. Law enforcement submitted the weapon for analysis, the results of which indicated that the gun was the same one fired at Merrill.

To escape the curious, Minor—who inherited his cousin's fortune—retreated to Glenburnie to meditate on the memory of its mistress. Yet Dana and Dockery, cleared of all charges, delighted in their newfound fame. Glenwood, long a financial burden, became a source of remuneration and, ironically, solace for their thwarted careers. Tourists, who paid admission to see the celebrated Goat Castle, listened patiently as Dana pecked out tunes on a borrowed piano and Dockery performed dramatic readings of her poetry. The house, which provided poor shelter for their persons, at least offered refuge for their blighted ambitions. **R**

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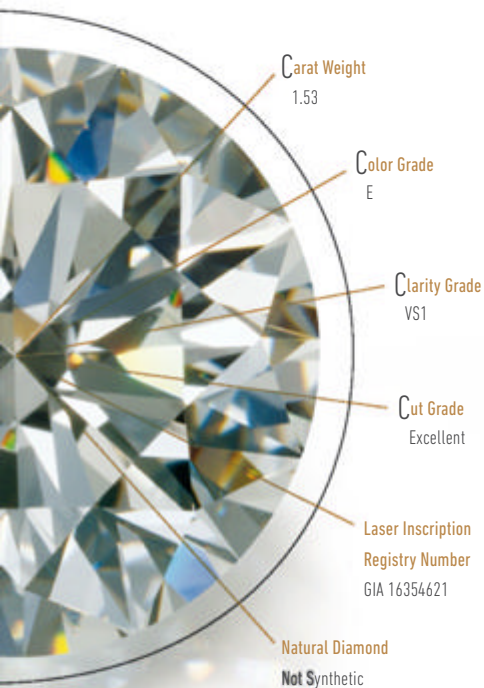
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A male model with dark hair, styled back, is wearing a vibrant blue Brioni suit. The suit features a subtle, fine-lined pattern. He is also wearing a white dress shirt and a blue patterned tie. He is posed against a rugged, brown rock wall. The lighting is dramatic, highlighting the texture of the suit and the background. The Brioni logo is visible in the lower center of the image.

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THE MAX FACTOR

1955 Mercedes-Benz 300SL



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HE 300SL, THE first of the Mercedes-Benz SL-Class (for Sport Leicht, or “sport light”) models, was produced at the suggestion of Max Hoffman, the U.S. importer for several European automakers including the company then known as Daimler-Benz. Hoffman believed a refined, road version of the company’s W194 Grand Prix racer would do well in the

U.S. market. He reportedly convinced Daimler-Benz to produce the 300SL by ordering 1,000 examples of the car before the company approved the project.

Like the W194 racecar, the 300SL was built on an aluminum space-frame chassis formed with welded tubes to increase its strength and minimize its weight. The chassis’s high sills led to the use of gullwing doors,



THE 300SL WAS BUILT
ON A RACECAR CHASSIS
WITH HIGH SILLS THAT
ENVELOPED THE DRIVER
AND PRECLUDED THE USE
OF TRADITIONAL DOORS.



PHOTOGRAPHY BY SCOTT WILLIAMSON/PHOTODESIGNSTUDIOS.COM

which became the coupe's signature feature and is now a common design element on supercars.

The 300SL was the world's first production car equipped with fuel injection. The system was derived from the V-12 engine that powered one of Germany's World War II fighter planes, the Messerschmitt Bf 109E. The car's single-overhead cam, straight-6 engine developed 215

hp and enabled a top speed of 161 mph, making the 300SL the fastest production model of its day.

Daimler-Benz built 1,400 examples of the coupe from 1955 to 1957 and 1,858 convertibles from 1957 to 1963. As Hoffman predicted, the 300SL was particularly popular in the United States: About 80 percent of the cars were purchased by U.S. customers. —ROBERT ROSS



NIXIE OF TIME

In a clock, once-obsolete cold cathode tubes become current again.

THE GERMAN ARTIST Frank Buchwald, best known for his *Machine Lights* series of illuminated sculptures, has found a creative application for a cache of unused, decades-old Nixie tubes. The cold cathode neon readout tubes were employed for the numeric displays in a variety of technical equipment until they were rendered obsolete by vacuum

fluorescent displays and light-emitting diodes in the 1980s. Buchwald showcases the tubes, which were made in East Germany in the 1960s and came to him from a collector, in the Nixie Machine, a 3-foot-long, 16.5-inch-tall device that he describes as an “altar of time.” Each machine is made of burnished steel and brushed brass and features three pairs of Nixie tubes



THE NIXIE MACHINE'S
DESIGNER, THE GERMAN
ARTIST FRANK BUCHWALD,
DESCRIBES IT AS AN
“ALTAR OF TIME.”



that illuminate to display the hours, minutes, and seconds of the day or the day, month, and year. The machine, which also includes an alarm-clock function, is priced at about \$27,000 and available from the M.A.D. Gallery in Geneva (mbandf.com). It will be limited to 12 examples, which will leave enough spare Nixie tubes to include an extra one with every machine and give

the gallery a stock for post-sales service.

Each machine takes at least five weeks to complete, mainly because Buchwald and his assistants finish the components by hand. “This makes the surface lively and gets the touch of the maker,” he says. “The hand-made appearance of the craftsmanship persists. This makes every piece unique.” —SHEILA GIBSON STOODLEY

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From David Arnold,

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ELEMENTS OF STYLE

Winning Streaks

BOLD STRIPES ARE lining up on a variety of men's fashion items this spring, lending an athletic look to casual jackets, sweaters, and accessories such as those shown here. The **Tod's** Script bag (\$1,595, tods.com) in dark-blue suede features a pair of contrasting stripes. The bag is also available in a lighter blue suede, tan suede, and dark-brown leather (\$1,765). **Bally** (bally.com) offers its Tesly moccasins (\$450) in a number of colors with contrasting stripes. Its Baldek belt (\$275) is available with the red and white stripes that are shown here or with black and white stripes. —JILL NEWMAN



Great Strides

THE BRITISH SHOEMAKER **Oliver Sweeney** (oliversweeney.com) produces classic shoe designs that can incorporate such comfortable contemporary elements as lightweight rubber soles and durable yet pliable leather. Examples include the Walberswick derby brogue boot (\$450, left) and Ashby derby brogue shoe (\$395, right). These styles usually are made with heavier leather uppers and hard leather soles. The Brantham double monk shoe (\$395, center), a style that originated in 15th-century European monasteries, features a traditional leather sole, but the treatment of the leather upper gives the shoe a modern look. —J.N.



STYLISH SHADES

THE NEW COLLECTION of sunglasses from **Ermenegildo Zegna** (zegna.com) includes these rimless aviator (\$380, left) and vintage wayfarer (\$295, right) models. The aviators fold at the bridge and come with a leather carrying case. The temples are made of lightweight titanium, and the lenses are produced by the 169-year-old German optics company Zeiss. The wayfarer model's frame is made of acetate and is available in four colors. Both models display the Zegna logo on the temples. —ANUSH BENLIYAN

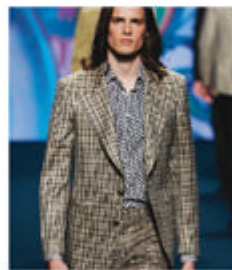
TREND SPOTTING

A colorful or graphic sport coat is a spring essential.



BRIGHT

Boglioli's double-breasted red jacket delivers a pop of fresh color. boglioli.it



BRILLIANT

A striking pattern updates Etro's classically tailored silhouette. etro.com

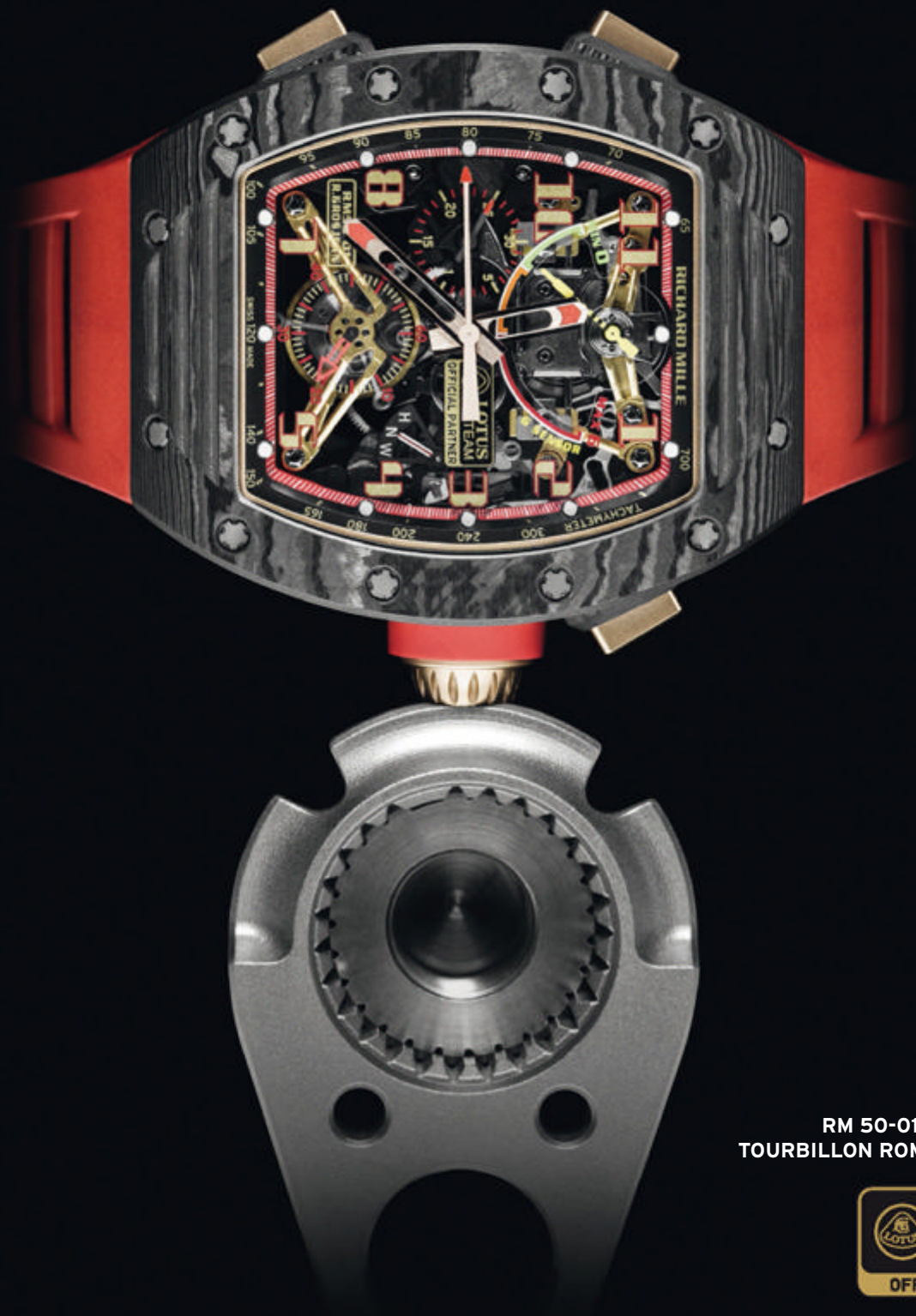


VIVID

Canali's blast of blue announces that spring has arrived. canali.com

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SMARTER SPECS

FOUNDED A CENTURY ago on Manhattan's Lower East Side, the eyewear company **Moscot** (moscot.com) is marking its centennial with the 100 Year Anniversary Collection. It includes this Lemtosh Smart matte-black acetate model (\$270), which features diamond-shaped rivets on the front and temples. The collection also includes a Lemtosh model that folds at the bridge (\$390) and another model with wood inlays on the front and temples (\$320). The yellow-tinted lenses are part of the Moscot Smart Drive Package (\$250), a set of three polarized lenses for different lighting conditions: yellow for nighttime, gray for sunny days, and vermilion for cloudy days. —CAROLYN MEERS

Case Study

THE DESIGNER IDAN YOSEFOV can appreciate the value of a functional and versatile bag. The 29-year-old Israeli traveled the world for five years before completing his master studies in leather-bag making in Florence, Italy. Last year, following a journey that took him to Cambodia, Australia, the Netherlands, and Los Angeles, he cofounded **Martella Leather Bags** (martellabags.com). The company, which makes its products in Istanbul, offers 10 models, including the \$810 Due Terzi (“two thirds”) shown here. It can be carried as a briefcase or a backpack, and it includes a protective smartphone compartment. —PAIGE REDDINGER



MIAMI FOR MEN

A NEW ADDITION to Miami's Design District, the multi-brand menswear boutique **Sartorial** (sartorialmiami.com) was opened by the sisters Tamara and Julia Medvedeva, Russian natives who operate seven stores in Europe. Sartorial offers made-to-measure suits and shirts and plans to offer custom-made shoes. It carries items from more than 20 Italian luxury brands. The store's selection includes tailored clothing and sportswear from Kiton, Pal Zileri, and Zilli; footwear from Sergio Rossi, Santoni, and A. Testoni; and hats from Borsalino. Customers will find items made of super wools, exotic hides, and other rare and exceptional materials. —P.R.

A fashion advertisement for Jitrois. The background is a light-colored, ornate interior with classical architectural details like columns and a decorative ceiling. Two models are featured. The model in the foreground is a woman with dark hair pulled back, looking directly at the camera with a serious expression. She is wearing a white, knee-length trench coat with a high collar and gold-toned buttons. The sleeves of the coat are decorated with intricate, colorful paisley-like patterns in blue, red, and yellow. She is also wearing white gloves and a white skirt. The model in the background is seen from the side, looking towards the first model. She is wearing a white short-sleeved top and a pleated skirt with horizontal stripes in a light brown or tan color.

jitrois.

www.jitrois.com

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REFINED DESIGNS

Pull of the Chain

ALTHOUGH IT may look archaic, the chain-and-fusée system displayed prominently through the dial of the new **Zenith Academy Georges Favre-Jacot** (zenith-watches.com) effectively performs its function, which is to maintain a consistent power level as the mainspring winds down. The mechanism, which was first used in clocks in the late 15th century, rarely appears in modern wristwatches, and when it does, it usually is accompanied by a tourbillon. Zenith combines the chain and fusée instead with a high-frequency balance system. Despite this modern touch, the movement of the finely wrought chain as it works in conjunction with the conical pulley is the watch's most captivating feature. Zenith will produce only 150 examples of the watch—in recognition of the brand's 150th anniversary this year—each of which is priced at \$82,700.

—JAMES D. MALCOLMSON

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BEACH BOUNTY

INSPIRED IN PART by the work of the New York jewelry legends Seaman Schepps and Fulco di Verdura, who used shells and other materials from the sea in many ornate designs in the 1940s and '50s, the Parisian designer Marie-Hélène Loubrielle has launched the **Shagreen & Tortoise** collection of shell rings (shagreen-et-tortoise.com). The name of the collection refers to the ray skin and tortoiseshell that Schepps and di Verdura frequently used in their jewelry. Loubrielle's rings combine seashells with 18-karat-gold vermeil and are set with rose-cut gemstones. They are priced from \$1,650 to \$1,900 and are available exclusively through Stone & Strand (stoneandstrand.com). —JILL NEWMAN



Presidential Pen

A LIFELONG PASSION AND a presidential campaign are referenced in the design of the **Montblanc John F. Kennedy Limited Edition 1917** (montblanc.com). Kennedy's love of sailing is represented by the ropelike pattern that appears on the pen's barrel and cap and by the engraving on the nib that depicts the lifesaver from *Victura*, his 26-foot sloop. The cap's ring is engraved with his 1960 presidential campaign slogan: "A time for greatness." The pen—which ranges in price from \$3,255 to \$3,765, depending on type—will be limited to 1,917 examples, a reference to the year of Kennedy's birth. —JOHN LYON

Lucky Charms

SCARABS—GEMS CUT IN the form of beetles—originated in ancient Egypt, where they served as amulets. Now they are reappearing in a variety of colorful new jewelry designs. They include (clockwise from left) a labradorite scarab ring with rubies (\$3,750) and an opal scarab ring with orange sapphires and diamonds (\$18,600) from **Silvia Furmanovich** (silviafurmanovich.com; available at Stanley Korshak, stanleykorshak.com); a turquoise cicada pendant with diamonds (\$19,750) from **Sylva & Cie.** (sylvacie.com; available at Mitchells, mitchellstores.com); and gray moonstone scarab earrings with diamonds (\$15,450) from **Sidney Garber** (sidneygarber.com). —J.N.



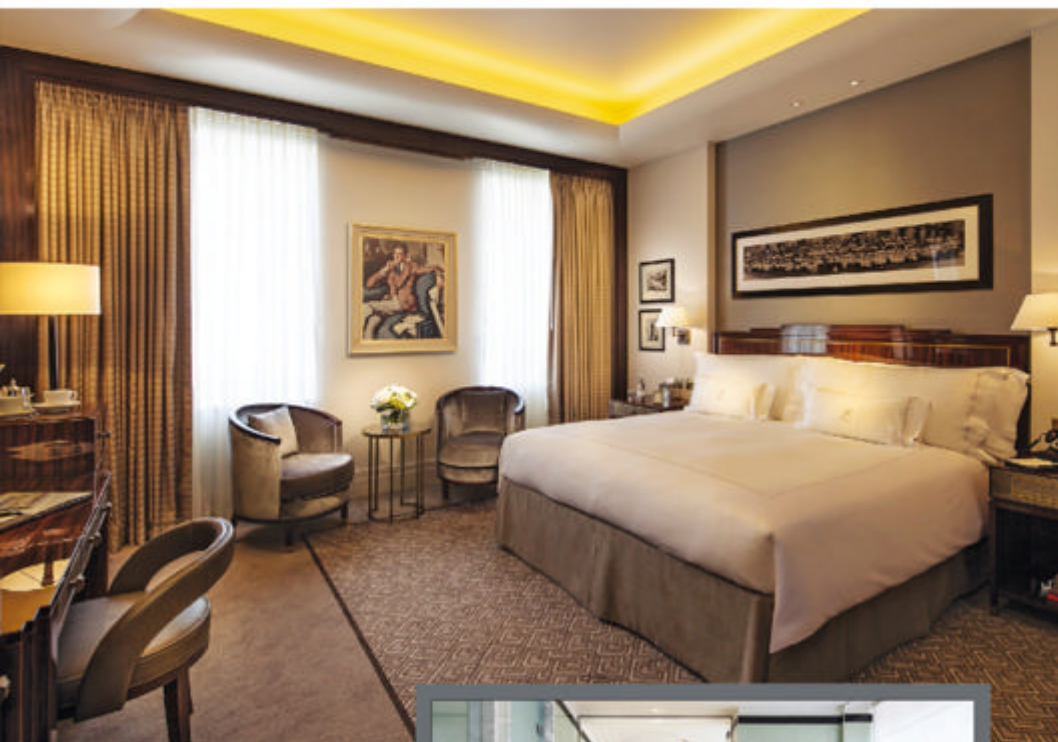


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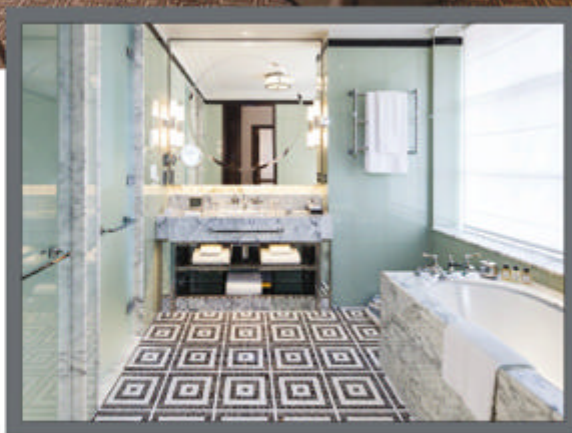
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**INSIDE APPEAL**

The Beaumont's club-like spaces suit the hotel's quiet but convenient location in Mayfair.

**GRAND OPENING**

London Confidential

THE LONDON restaurateurs Jeremy King and Chris Corbin are best known for the Wolseley, their grandiose and wildly popular Viennese-style café on Piccadilly. For their first hotel, however, the partners of more than 30 years veered from the high-profile path, selecting a tucked-away location on a quiet lane off Oxford Street in Mayfair. **The Beaumont** (thebeaumont.com), which opened last October, is suitably low-key for its setting yet confidently luxurious, the kind of place where regular visitors to London might store a couple of Savile Row suits for future stays. The hotel's 73 guest rooms include 23 private-club-like suites, each of which unfolds as a collection of distinct spaces rather than a multipurpose box. The New York-style Colony Grill Room and American Bar are hidden behind discreet doors off the lobby, while the Cub Room—a bar reserved for Beaumont “residents”—is secreted away farther still. All this exclusivity, of course, need not shut out guests from the liveliness that is London. Despite their covert location, the public bar and restaurant have become popular with locals. And just out from the Beaumont's front entrance, guests can glimpse the grand facade of Selfridges—the bustling heart of the Oxford Street shopping scene—a half block away. —BRUCE WALLIN

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GRAND
OPENING

Perfect Zen

LOCATED WITHIN THE top six floors of the financial district's Otemachi Tower, the **Aman Tokyo** (amantokyo.com) is a rare retreat amid the Japanese capital's vast and vibrant urban sprawl. Guests arriving at the hotel, which opened in December, can pass through Otemachi Forest, a 38,750-square-foot ground-floor garden thick with konara oaks and ginkgo. An ascent to the 33rd floor leads to a lobby with a reception desk carved from an ancient camphor tree. Washi paper screens, chestnut floors lined with tatami mats, and *furo*-style soaking tubs bring traditional Japanese minimalism to the 84 guest rooms and suites, many of which offer a glimpse of Mount Fuji beyond the booming metropolis. In the 26,900-square-foot spa, patrons don kimono-style robes and choose from a variety of Western and Japanese treatments; a similar East-meets-West mix is found in the restaurant, which serves pan-Asian and Mediterranean cuisines. For a purely local experience, the hotel's concierge can arrange a trip to the historic Miyasaka sake brewery or a visit to the Tsukiji fish market. —JILL NEWMAN



MAP QUEST

Rare atlases and travel manuscripts go to auction.

A collection of historic books, manuscripts, prints, and photographs from around the world will hit the block on April 30 at Sotheby's London. **Travel, Atlases, Maps, and Natural History** (sothebys.com) will

include a large assemblage of early photographs from Singapore, China, and Cambodia, along with rare tomes on the Middle East and manuscript maps of Sri Lanka. Expected to fetch upwards of \$40,000 is *The History of*

Travayle in the West and East Indies, a 16th-century account in English outlining the voyages of the Spanish conquistadors Francisco Hernández de Córdoba, Juan de Grijalva, and Hernán Cortés. —JACKIE CARADONIO

GRAND
OPENING

PINK PALACE



IN DECEMBER, JOHANNESBURG'S beloved Westcliff Hotel—known since 1998 for its rosy facade and African-inspired interiors—emerged from an 18-month renovation by Four Seasons Hotels and Resorts. The resulting **Four Seasons Hotel the Westcliff, Johannesburg** (fourseasons.com), is a sleek and modern rendering of its treasured predecessor, featuring 117 rooms adorned with chrome chandeliers and custom-made zebra-print wallpaper. Four Seasons' contemporary spin also elevated the hotel's culinary offerings, which—led by the German chef Dirk Gieselmann (formerly of the Michelin-three-star Auberge de l'Île in Illhaeusern, France)—include a fine-dining restaurant and a casual venue serving classic South African braai. Remaining resolutely unchanged through the flurry of upgrades is the Westcliff's magnificent hilltop perch overlooking the capital's surprisingly verdant cityscape. —SARAH KAHN

BOTTOM: RICHARD WAITE



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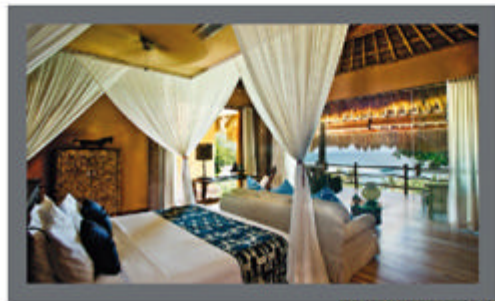
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TEXAS THREE STEP



PROVING THAT EVERYTHING is bigger in Texas, the new 34-story **JW Marriott Austin** (jwmarriottaustin.com) opened in February as the luxury brand's largest North American hotel, towering over nearly an entire block of the capital city's fast-growing downtown area. The 1,012-room property offers appropriately bold amenities, including a food truck-style restaurant and a sweeping rooftop pool terrace with views of Lady Bird Lake and the State Capitol. Nearby, in the bucolic Hill Country just west of the city, the **Lake Austin Spa Resort** (lakeaustin.com) has debuted 10 renovated garden suites. Completed in October, the new-look accommodations at the lakeside retreat feature 12-foot-high wooden ceilings, opulent fabrics, and custom-made furnishings. **The Inn at Dos Brisas** (dosbrisas.com)—a Relais & Châteaux resort set on a 313-acre ranch between Austin and Houston—will soon debut a new design of its own. In July, the property will begin renovations of four of its nine hacienda-style casitas. —BECCA HENSLEY

Making Waves



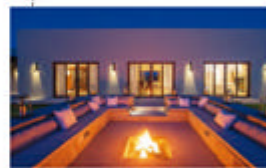
A RENOWNED SURFER'S retreat on Indonesia's Sumba Island, **Nihiwatu** (nihiwatu.com) has debuted a luxurious new look suitable for discerning vacationers and hard-core wave-chasers alike. Completed this spring, the \$15 million transformation of the 1,074-acre property included the addition of 12 villas with gauzy canopy beds, Sumbanese teak furnishings, and oversize terraces with private pools. The villas and the preexisting 21 accommodations (all of which underwent top-to-bottom renovations) are attended by *moriumas*, or butlers, who can arrange spa treatments, make reservations at the resort's new restaurant, and organize surfing excursions with a resident pro. —MARGIE GOLDSMITH



OFF THE HOOK

Cast away at a pair of new South American lodges.

ON THE FLY ♦ The outfitter Frontiers debuted the seven-room **Limay River**



Lodge (frontierstravel.com) in Argentine Patagonia last December, offering convenient access to the trout-filled southern banks of the Middle Limay River. Following a day of angling, guests can retire by the living room's fireplace with a glass of local wine from the cellar.

UP RIVER ♦ Opened in October in the Chilean Lake District near Pucón, **Hacienda Hotel Vira Vira** sits on a 100-acre parcel of riverfront parkland. Guests of the 21-room lodge can fish for king salmon on the tranquil Liucura River or venture to the nearby Trancura River for chinook. —J.C.

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CELLAR NOTES

Chilly Recipe

THE BUREAU OF Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives officially describes vodka as colorless, odorless, and tasteless; but anyone who sips two different vodka martinis side by side knows the bureau to be wrong. Although often subtle, the distinctions between individual vodkas are primarily the result of diverse distillation ingredients and filtration techniques—both of which are frequently touted by brands for promotional purposes. Seldom do marketers focus on the water, which Stolichnaya has elevated to a rarely achieved prominence with its Elit Pristine Water Series.

In 2012, Elit introduced the first of its boutique, ultra-premium vodkas: the Himalayan Edition, a spirit created using snowmelt from the Himalayan Mountains. The following year, the New Zealand Edition was unveiled, featuring water from the Blue Spring. Now the company has released the third and final offering in the series, the **Elit by Stolichnaya Pristine Water Series: Andean Edition** (\$3,000, elitbystoli.com), whose 250-bottle production was distilled from the crystal-clear issue of a lake in the Andes Mountains of Chile.

The Andean Edition relies, like its predecessors, on a recipe that calls for 97 percent wheat and 3 percent rye, and a filtering regimen that uses quartz sand, Russian-birch charcoal, and cloth. A freeze-out filtration process unique to Stolichnaya's Elit products chilled the spirit to -18 degrees Celsius for eight hours, binding together any remaining impurities, which electrokinetic filters then trapped. The only variable was the water.

In contrast to the citrus notes of the Himalayan version and the spicier profile of the New Zealand one, the Andean Edition reveals crisp hints of wet stone and grass on the palate. Although a curious few might succumb to temptation and mix a martini for the purposes of comparison, this vodka, like its siblings, should never be tainted with vermouth. —RICHARD CARLETON HACKER

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CELLAR
NOTES

Cosmic Cuvée



OUR MINDS ARE trained from an early age to discover unity in the universe's infinite multiplicity, and this tendency persists even in the small cosmos of wine, whose inhabitants seem preoccupied with the process of separation. Vintners divide regions into appellations, vineyards into blocks and micro crus, but their ultimate goal is to assemble the fruit of these labors into a delectable whole. Few if any have accomplished this aim using more diverse oenological components than the owners of Terlato Family Vineyards, whose **Galaxy 2010** (\$95, terlatovineyards.com) combines Cabernet Sauvignon, Syrah, and Merlot produced by three different winemakers in three distinct regions of the Napa and Dry Creek Valleys. Redolent of black cherry, plum, lilac, and citronella, this unorthodox blend integrates its flavors of boysenberry, cherry lozenge, red apple, toffee, and charred bread into a richly satisfying unity.

—BRETT ANDERSON



Pacaud 2.0

MATHIEU PACAUD, the 34-year-old chef behind the new Paris restaurant **Hexagone** (hexagone-paris.fr), says he “wanted to create a place where [his] friends want to hang out.” But instead of creating yet another *bistro nouveau*, Pacaud—who worked in the Michelin three-star kitchen of his father, chef Bernard Pacaud—has revived the art of fine dining. His tasting and à la carte menus are complex yet light and filled with flavor. A dish called *Gelée Anisée*, for example, enhances juicy crayfish with cauliflower mousseline, fresh flowers and herbs, star-anise aspic, and a delicately perfumed green-mango sauce. The extensive wine list by Benjamin Roffet focuses on the classics with a generous selection of grand crus by the glass, and the elegant dining room, designed by Patrick Gilles and Dorothee Boissier, is as on point as the menu. —CARL REINHOLDT ZON BELFRAGE

BIT MASTER

FOR ALL BUT seasoned grill masters (who prefer to cook over wood or charcoal and to judge for themselves when food is ready), the **Lynx SmartGrill** (lynxgrills.com) may prove a welcome cooking companion. Guided by user preferences and hundreds of preprogrammed recipes, the SmartGrill's onboard operating system syncs with smartphone and tablet apps to tell the cook with Siri-like voice prompts when to flip food and take it off the grill. The infrared burner—powered by propane or natural gas—allows for quick changes of radiant heat, while stainless-steel grates ensure high surface-heat retention. The SmartGrill (from \$6,000) is available in 30-, 36-, and 42-inch grill widths. —BAILEY S. BARNARD





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An Excess of Anticipation

THE LONG-AWAITED SECOND-GENERATION **Acura NSX** (acura.com) is finally arriving. It was introduced in January and will go on sale this summer; deliveries are expected to begin by the end of the year. The first-generation NSX—acclaimed for its reliability as well as its performance capabilities—went out of production in 2005 after a 15-year run. Honda, Acura's parent company, began developing a successor to the car in 2007, but the recession stalled the project. Then three years ago, Acura introduced the new NSX as a concept vehicle. The production version was unveiled at this year's North American International Auto Show in Detroit. It is a hybrid-electric sports car powered by a mid-mounted twin-turbo V-6 engine and three electric motors. The engine and motors together produce "north of 550 hp," according to Acura. Made of aluminum and carbon fiber, the car is lightweight and equipped with a twin-clutch, 9-speed transmission and permanent all-wheel drive. Expect the price to be upwards of \$150,000. —ROBERT ROSS


MADE IN AMERICA

Acura will build the NSX at its production facility in Marysville, Ohio.





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Flying High

LIKE THE TURKISH brand's hardtop model that preceded it, the recently launched **Numarine 70 Flybridge** (numarine.com) features extensive use of glass, which allows natural light to fill the saloon and cabins and lends a distinct look to the exterior. The flybridge includes seating and lounging areas, a wet bar, and room for a crane and a tender or personal watercraft. The yacht, which is designed to

be owner operated, includes three en suite guest cabins. The master suite features two large windows on its hull walls, a walk-in closet, a spacious bathroom, a dressing table, and a sofa. On the main deck, the saloon has a galley and bar, a dining area, and a lounging area. The 70 Flybridge has a top speed of 34 knots and a cruising speed of 28 knots. It is priced at about \$2.56 million.

—LARRY BEAN



BRONZE BEAUTY

THE ITALIAN YACHT designer **Federico Fiorentino** (federicofiorentino.it) has introduced a 164-foot concept vessel called *The Belafonte*. The design features a streamlined, bronze-colored hull and superstructure that are made of aluminum. It calls for a fast-displacement hull that would enable a top speed of 18 to 24 knots, depending on the propulsion system. The yacht would accommodate 10 guests in five cabins, including a 904-square-foot main-deck owner's suite with a fold-down balcony, two bathrooms, and two walk-in closets. The main deck's design also includes a spacious saloon with a dining area, as well as a swimming pool. The partially enclosed upper deck would feature an outdoor dining area, a shaded bar, and a hot tub. —L.B. **R**



GOOD SIGN

Bettinardi's latest putters.

The 2015 collection of putters from **Bettinardi Golf** (bettinardi.com) includes the top-of-the-line Signature Series 10 (\$495, shown) and Signature Series 9 (\$495). Like previous models in the Signature Series, they reflect the design and performance preferences of the company's founder and CEO, Robert Bettinardi. The blade of the Signature Series 10 features a deep face to accentuate the sweet spot. A honeycomb pattern is milled into the face. The Signature Series 9 is a half-moon mallet design with perimeter weighting that enhances the sweet spot. Both putters are made of stainless steel and have red leather grips. Production of each Signature Series model is limited to 1,000 examples. —L.B.



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Looking the Part

THE ASTON MARTIN VANTAGE GT HAS THE APPEARANCE OF A WINNER.

THERE IS A motorsports adage that says the best way to make a small fortune in racing is to begin with a large one. Such cynicism pre-dates the Aston Martin Vantage GT, a new version of the V8 Vantage that has a starting price of just under \$100,000. The car can be taken to the track, but just by channeling the marque's racing heritage, it will indulge a driver's checkered-flag fantasies.

Available as a coupe or a roadster, the Vantage GT uses the same lightweight aluminum chassis as Aston Martin's GT4 Challenge racecar. It is powered by the company's 4.7-liter V-8 engine, which produces 430 hp and 361 ft

60 mph in 4.6 seconds. Top speed is 190 mph. The car comes with a standard 6-speed manual transmission or an optional automated manual with paddle shifters.

Aston Martin offers the Vantage GT in five liveries, including color schemes that reference the marque's notable sports cars of the recent and more distant past. The Alloro Green exterior with yellow trim echoes that of the CC100 Speedster, the V-12-powered concept car that Aston Martin introduced in 2013 to celebrate its 100th anniversary; the company built only two examples. The Speedster's green is based on the color of the DBR1 racecar that Carroll Shelby and Roy Salvadori drove to victory in the 1959 24 Hours of Le Mans.





❖
The Vantage GT's Alloro Green (top) and Mariana Blue (bottom) color schemes reference Aston Martin cars that were successful racers.



Another color scheme, Mariana Blue with red accents (including what Aston Martin refers to as “lipstick” around the grille), recalls UWL 333, the DB2/4 that the British gentleman racer Bobby Parke piloted to five victories in 1955. The Skyfall Silver color option is a nod to James Bond’s DB5 of the mid-1960s, though it includes white accents to give the car a more contemporary look.

The Vantage GT is equipped with forged alloy or gray graphite wheels, which are wrapped in high-performance Bridgestone Potenza tires. The car’s big, powerful brakes include calipers painted in a choice of five colors, including yellow and red.

The driver-centric cockpit encourages you to channel your inner Shelby. The sport seats are wrapped in sumptuous leather and Alcantara with contrast stitching, and they cradle every body curve.

The Vantage GT costs about \$20,000 less than the standard V8 Vantage coupe, but with the price difference comes a trade-off: The new car is not ideal for daily commuting or long road trips. It is, however, well suited to driving on Sundays, carving canyon roads, and passing hypermilers on two-lane highways. With its sport-tuned suspension, the Vantage GT stays firmly planted over every pit and pebble. After you take it for a whirl around the block, driving another sports car can feel like piloting a sofa. And then there is the growl of the engine: It is the perfect sound for a car that appears poised for podium finishes.

—LAURA BURSTEIN

Aston Martin, astonmartin.com



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Family Valuables

THE YOUNGER GENERATION HELPS TAKE DAVID YURMAN
IN ENLIGHTENING NEW DIRECTIONS.

FOR LAST YEAR'S 30th anniversary of David Yurman's signature Cable bracelet, the jeweler's son Evan re-created the object (usually made of precious metal and encrusted with gems) as a limited-edition series of colorful, anodized-aluminum bangles. "Evan

took a common base metal and made it into a design, like the Campbell's soup can," says David, who started the company with his wife, Sybil, 34 years ago. "It was counterintuitive to what we do."

To David's surprise, the bright aluminum bracelets sold out, and this success

The Albion Collector's Series features rings in (from top) rubellite, labradorite, snowflake obsidian, sugilite, and cognac diamonds. The brand also offers pinkie rings in a range of stones, including hot-pink spinels, Paraiba tourmalines, and blue sapphires.

encouraged him to collaborate with Evan on reshaping yet another Yurman classic, the 20-year-old Albion motif. This brand hallmark, which uses chunky, square-shaped cushion-cut stones with slightly rounded, convex edges, has been not only refined and contoured but also produced in an arresting mix of gemstones and metal treatments. The Albion Collector's Series features unusual stones, some of which the Yurmans uncovered last year at the Tucson Gem & Mineral Show. "Evan knows more about stones than I'll ever know," says David, whose favorite outing is his annual trip with Evan to Arizona in search of inspiration. "Evan's talent is in his DNA."

Father and son are similar in many ways, but like any creative person, Evan explores his own direction. When the younger Yurman first joined the business more than a decade ago, he developed an innovative men's collection that combined such unconventional materials as pietersite and dinosaur bone with bold, contemporary forms. He then parlayed his love of colorful gemstones into the company's first high-jewelry collection, which presented rare, one-off stones in a range of important pieces. And inspired by antique pinkie rings he had seen in stores and books, Evan broached with his father two years ago the idea of creating modern examples in every colored gemstone imaginable.

Although he also serves as the company's CEO, David is not ready to surrender his role as lead designer to the next generation; yet he clearly enjoys seeing the brand's aesthetic evolve through his son's imaginative contributions. "Evan didn't want to follow in his parents' footsteps," he says. "It was important that he forge his own territory."

—JILL NEWMAN

David Yurman, davidyurman.com



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Going Private

CHRISTIE'S OFFERS AN AUCTION ALTERNATIVE WITH AN EXCLUSIVE NEW WING.

IT WAS STANDING room only at Christie's Post-War & Contemporary Art auction last November. The show—featuring nearly 80 lots ranging from Andy Warhol's *Triple Elvis* to Jeff Koons's *Pink Panther*—promised to be one of the biggest nights in history for the Manhattan auction house, with an estimated \$600 million worth of art on the block at its Rockefeller Center headquarters. By evening's end, that hefty estimate proved downright conservative, with the gavel resting on a record-shattering \$852.9 million. For Christie's, however, many of the night's biggest sales—which included more than a dozen all-time-high prices for artists such as Cy Twombly and Ed Ruscha—transacted not on the auction floor, but rather in private rooms secreted behind tinted windows above the crowd.

From 2013 to 2014, Christie's reported a 12 percent increase in overall art sales. With the house's rise in business, however, many of its top clients have started migrating to a

more private alternative to the traditional auction format. Christie's says that 17 percent of its 2014 totals can be attributed to private sales in settings such as the rooms above the auction floor. To address this growing demand, the company in November launched its West Galleries, an 11,000-square-foot network of Rockefeller Center showrooms devoted to private transactions.

"From 2012 to 2013, we saw a 20 percent growth in private sales. From 2013 to 2014, it is nearly 50 percent," says Vivian Pfeiffer, senior vice president and director of private sales at Christie's. "We felt the time was right for a new kind of private experience."

Designed by the architect Annabelle Selldorf, the West Galleries combines public exhibition space with a handful of private viewing rooms. Each room approximates a real-world setting, from a living room-style space furnished with leather armchairs to a museum-quality space with 16-foot-high ceilings. Throughout, state-of-the-art lighting and technology ensure optimal viewing

experiences. "The West Galleries makes for a beautiful experience in which you can sit down and enjoy your viewing," Pfeiffer says. "You are not sitting with 1,000 other people."

The new wing builds on long-established private services that enable collectors to work with consignors to buy and sell specific works outside of the auction timeline and setting. Pfeiffer notes that top clients may also view a potential acquisition outside of the galleries—in their homes or elsewhere.

The West Galleries' first private-selling exhibition, *Rockefeller Center and the Rise of Modernism in the Metropolis*, opened in January and featured works by artists including Diego Rivera and Georgia O'Keeffe. Though open to the public for viewing, the show did not culminate in a raucous auction. "It is not a high-risk or fast experience," Pfeiffer says. "Having that real privacy provides the best possible scenario for a collector." —JACKIE CARADONIO

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The Renaissance Club's new One Time Experience offers non-members the chance to play the course and stay at its newly built clubhouse.
❖

East Lothian Local

A PRIVATE CLUB'S NEW PUBLIC OFFERING OPENS UP THE LEGENDS OF SCOTLAND'S GOLF COAST.

SCOTLAND'S EAST LOTHIAN region is rightly referred to as the country's Golf Coast. The wind-swept stretch of Caledonia—located about a half hour east of Edinburgh—is home to more than 20 courses, including such treasures as Muirfield, Gullane, and the world's third oldest club, North Berwick. The game was first played on this headland course in the middle part of the 17th century, and the keen breeze that blows off the Firth of Forth has been baffling golfers there ever since.

East Lothian's dense collection of high-caliber courses—Muirfield, Gullane, and North Berwick are all within a 5-mile stretch—also includes a few notable newcomers. Archerfield Links Golf Club opened in 2004 with two formidable courses, and just next door, the Renaissance Club made its debut in 2008 with an epic layout by the American architect Tom Doak. Last fall the latter club cracked open its doors to

nonmembers with the introduction of its One Time Experience, an offering that allows guests to play the private course and stay at its newly built clubhouse for as long as a week. The program provides visiting golfers with an ideal base for exploring East Lothian's elite layouts, among which Doak's Renaissance design has quickly established itself as a worthy member.

Doak, who spent a year after college living and working at St. Andrews, was at first wary of building a course on the 300-acre coastal site. "To be honest, I was concerned that people's expectations for a course between Muirfield and North Berwick would be impossible to meet," he says. "However, I warmed to the idea once I remembered that the Scots would appreciate the course for what it was."

Doak recently returned to the Renaissance Club to build three new holes on land that previously belonged to the Honourable

Company of Edinburgh Golfers, also known as Muirfield. The additions include a strong par-3 ninth hole that plays to a green framed by the Firth of Forth. "When you arrive at the green, the vista around the point to Fidra lighthouse comes into view when you don't expect it," says Doak, referring to a landmass that was said to be the inspiration behind Robert Louis Stevenson's *Treasure Island*.

The club has turned the original three holes into a practice loop and an expansive academy area and driving range. The remaining 15 holes play around a pine-and-sycamore-studded coppice and feature large contoured greens, fescue-lined fairways, and riveted humpback bunkers. The remnants of ancient boundary walls run alongside four of the holes, including the 18th, and enfold the imposing three-story clubhouse.

Completed in 2013, the clubhouse offers 24 well-appointed guest suites, a spa, a gym, a fine-dining restaurant, a bar, and a billiard room. In addition to arranging rounds at the Renaissance Club, the clubhouse staff will help secure starts at Muirfield, North Berwick, and other legendary East Lothian layouts. —FARHAD HEYDARI

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Sole Searchers

A PARISIAN SHOEMAKER'S PASSION FOR THE HUMAN TOUCH HAS WON HIM A CULT FOLLOWING.

PIERRE CORTHAY LIKENS his refined footwear to a classic car's chassis. "It's all about the balance of the width, length, and volume," says the 52-year-old cobbler, whose aesthetic was shaped by his grandfather's collection of venerable vehicles. Like those timeless automobiles, Corthay's distinctive shoes present sculptural silhouettes, nuanced colors and finishes, and subtly concealed details that enhance comfort. Awarded the prestigious Maître d'art by the French Minister of Culture for his excellence in craftsmanship, Corthay is considered among the world's best shoemakers, and the demand for his creations is growing. "It is easy to have everything today, but not bespoke shoes, because you have to wait up to six months for a pair," he says. "Today, people appreciate the humanness in handmade shoes, and they can see the human touch in each shoe."

This personal attention limits Corthay's annual production to about 150 pairs of



Each pair of shoes that Pierre Corthay makes must be as individual as the client who wears them.

bespoke shoes, the lasts for which the cobbler carves himself in his small Parisian atelier, where four other craftsmen—including his younger brother, Christophe—assist him. His process has changed little since age 16, when he entered the rigorous Compagnons du Devoir, a French trade school that dates to the Middle Ages. During the seven-year program, he served as an apprentice in workshops around France; he later secured jobs at John Lobb's and Berluti's workshops. In 1990, he established his own atelier and quickly gained a following that has flourished over the past decade. Some of his most devoted clients have more than 100 pairs of bespoke shoes, which start at \$5,000 a pair.

The ever-increasing requests range from conservative derby styles to pink crocodile lace-ups with metal toe tips, and this demand prompted Corthay to establish a second atelier that fabricates ready-to-wear examples. In this larger workshop, 25 craftspeople produce a collection of ready-to-wear shoes that start at \$1,200 per pair and can be personalized with custom colors and details. This new line can be found at Corthay's flagship boutique near Place Vendôme and at his recently opened retail spaces in Hong Kong, Dubai, London, and Beijing.

Even so, these expanded offerings remain nearly as limited as the bespoke product, for they too are largely handmade—a point on which Corthay is unwilling to compromise. The artisan still relishes carving the wooden lasts for the custom designs and the prototypes of the ready-to-wear models. "It's a contemplative job," he says, "because it is something you do alone, and your mind can float and wander." The meditative nature of the work perhaps explains its appeal to would-be apprentices: He has recently observed a newfound interest among Parisian women and youths in learning the trade. Corthay is thus encouraged that age-old shoemaking traditions will imbue a new generation of cobblers and clients with an appreciation for the human touch. —JILL NEWMAN

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Southern California's Rancho Valencia resort debuted 18 new championship tennis courts last year.

For the Love of the Game

RANCHO VALENCIA'S NEWLY RENOVATED TENNIS CENTER SERVES UP A SERENELY SATISFYING EXPERIENCE.

THE SCENT OF eucalyptus fills the air as I hastily flip a yellow felt ball skyward and—*thump!*—hit it hard across the court. The ball's flight, however, proves neither powerful nor true, ending lazily in no-man's-land on the other side of the net. Robin White—a two-time U.S. Open Champion in doubles and mixed doubles who is now the director of tennis at Southern California's Rancho Valencia resort—is not discouraged. "Slow down the beginning and make sure to bring your racket up by your ponytail," she says, adding that, rather than throwing the ball, I should focus on "placing" it in the air. Attempting this softer approach, I send my next serve firmly across the court, landing it squarely in the corner of the backside box. "How did you like that one?" White asks with a smile.

Based at "tennis heaven," as she calls this 45-acre retreat in northern San Diego, White has brought a fresh perspective to the property's renowned programs in the sport. Rancho Valencia opened in 1989 and



fast became an escape for ace tennis players, known for its John Gardiner-led camps and high-stakes tournaments. Last summer the resort renewed its decades-long dedication to the sport with the debut of a renovated tennis center with 18 Plexipave courts, an expanded clubhouse, and a new pro shop. Thanks to White, with the redesigned facility came a new air of leisure on Rancho Valencia's courts.

"I played the game at the highest level, and I think it's better to play tennis to add to your life," says White, who began revamping Rancho Valencia's programs in 2012. "It shouldn't devastate you. I want you to walk away with something. I want you to

say, 'I got 1 percent better.'"

Under White's direction, monthly matches are now followed by social engagements, where guests and members might mingle over beef sliders, lobster nachos, and tequila cocktails in the Pony Room bar. Of course, guests in search of serious improvement in their game can choose a more rigorous training program—from world-class clinics to one-on-one instruction—led by White and other on-site pros including an Olympic bronze medalist and a Wimbledon semifinalist.

By the end of my afternoon with White, my strokes are fluid and I am tempted to keep practicing. However, taking White's credo to heart, I instead head to Rancho Valencia's Veladora restaurant. Over a post-workout meal of rib-cap steak paired with a Syrah from the northern Rhône, I feel far more than 1 percent better.

—CASEY HATFIELD-CHIOTTI

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❖ Villa Stéphanie opened in a 19th-century mansion adjoining the historic Brenners Park-Hotel & Spa in January. ❖



Bath and Beyond

A NEW RETREAT ELEVATES BADEN-BADEN'S LONG-STANDING SPA CULTURE.

I SQUEEZE MY eyes shut and clench my fists, digging my fingers into my sweaty palms in an attempt to hold still as Jürgen twists my feet forward then backward then left then right. Utterly German in his approach to reflexology, the therapist—whom I learn between groans of pain has been practicing the Eastern technique for more than 25 years—locates my weak spots and then kneads away at them with merciless precision.

“Your kidneys are thirsty,” he tells me as he jams his thumb into my arch and wiggles it up and down. Then, moving to the flesh just beneath my little toe, he stabs the tip of his fingernail deeper and deeper until a low grunt escapes my lips. “You have just gotten off a plane, yes?” he asks. “You should have a massage tomorrow.”

Jürgen is both well intentioned and well informed: I have indeed just arrived in Baden-Baden, Germany’s oldest and greatest sybaritic escape. Set in the northern foothills of the Black Forest, the resort town

was founded nearly 2,000 years ago by the Romans, who, upon discovering the natural hot springs flowing beneath its soils, constructed elaborate bathhouses intended to cure everything from arthritis to fatigue. A couple of millennia later, the grand healing tradition of Baden-Baden (whose name means “to bathe”—twice) has taken a contemporary turn with the debut of Villa Stéphanie, a 15-room wellness retreat that incorporates spa and beauty treatments with fitness, nutrition, and medical therapies.

Opened in January as part of the Oetker Collection, Villa Stéphanie adjoins the brand’s Brenners Park-Hotel & Spa and the Haus Julius medical facility. Accordingly, experiences at the villa can be as regimented or as relaxing as guests desire. Itineraries based on individuals’ body types, preferences, and abilities may include nutritional consultations, fitness classes, and medical checkups, along with such treatments as Sisley massages and SkinCeuticals facials. Visitors can opt for healthy menus designed

by Villa Stéphanie’s nutritionists, or choose instead the Michelin-starred cuisine at Brenners Park-Restaurant. The 15 modern accommodations also house a wealth of choices: Suites include private fitness areas and Finnish saunas, and every guest room is equipped with a digital-detox button that suspends Internet and mobile connectivity.

“Our programs are entirely up to our guests,” says Hans-Peter Veit, the spa manager at Villa Stéphanie. “We provide healthy options and encourage guests to work toward their goals, but we also believe that a stay here is a holiday that should be enjoyed.”

Following Veit’s—and Jürgen’s—advice, I book an Anika Organic Luxury Vitality wrap, during which my therapist massages black mud into my skin to rid my body of toxins. An hour later, I am relaxed and restored, my shoulders no longer ache, and my kidneys feel fully quenched. —JACKIE CARADONIO

Villa Stéphanie, +49.7221.9000, villastephanie.com

JACKIE CARADONIO

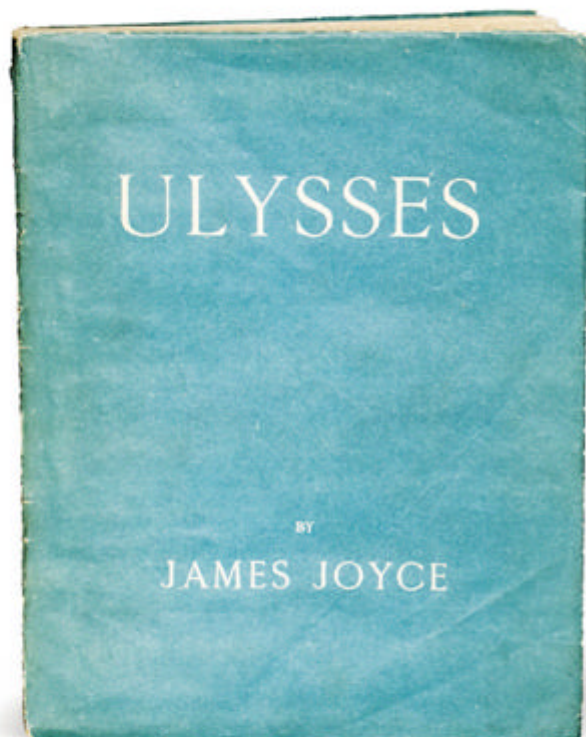


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In Full Bloom

THE ODYSSEY OF *ULYSSES* HAS TAKEN THE NOVEL FROM BEING BANNED TO BECOMING A COVETED COLLECTIBLE.

WHILE JAMES JOYCE enthusiasts look forward to Bloomsday, the annual celebration of the Irish author's life and work that takes place June 16, Joyce fans who are also serious bibliophiles may be more interested in April 9 through 12, when the New York Antiquarian Book Fair comes to the Park Avenue Armory in Manhattan. The fair's offerings will include at least one rare first-edition *Ulysses*, the Joyce novel that follows Dubliner Leopold Bloom for a day on June 16, 1904. Hailed as a masterpiece when it debuted in 1922, the 700-plus-page stream-of-consciousness tale has lost none of its potency with literati, and its first edition continues to gain popularity with collectors. The initial print run of the softcover novel yielded only 1,000 copies, none of

which were allowed in the United States.

"The book was anticipated for many, many years because of its serialization in the *Little Review*," says Terry Halladay, literature manager for the William Reese Company, a rare-books dealer in New Haven, Conn. The *Little Review* was a U.S. literary journal that published *Ulysses* in installments from 1918 until 1920, when the journal's editors were charged in New York with circulating obscene material. The charges were based largely on the journal's publishing of the "Nausicaa" chapter of *Ulysses*, in which Bloom fantasizes about a young woman until fireworks explode at a nearby bazaar. The metaphor was not lost on the judges, whose verdict in 1921 effectively banned the book in the United States. It was also banned in the United Kingdom.

Thus the first edition of *Ulysses* was published in Paris, by Shakespeare and Company, a bookstore owned by the U.S. expatriate Sylvia Beach. It was not until 1933 that the book became legally available in the United States, after Bennett Cerf, a founder of the publisher Random House, won a landmark censorship case titled *United States v. One Book Called Ulysses*.

Collectors seeking a first-edition *Ulysses* will find one that is in superb condition at the Raptis Rare Books booth at the New York Antiquarian Book Fair. The Brattleboro, Vt., dealer's example is priced at \$75,000. Other dealers that may bring first editions of *Ulysses* to the fair include the William Reese Company and Bibliotopos of Century City, Calif. If they do not have a copy on hand, they should be able to locate one for a collector.

Tom Lecky, head of the department of printed books and manuscripts at Christie's New York, presided over the 2002 sale of a first-edition *Ulysses* for \$460,500, an auction record for a Joyce book. The initial *Ulysses* production run included three versions: the standard edition (750 copies), one printed on heavier paper and with wider margins (150 copies), and one printed on Dutch handmade paper (100 copies). The record-setting copy belongs to the last group and includes an inscription from Joyce. The same copy had sold at Christie's in 1988 for \$42,000. Lecky says that today it is worth twice as much as its 2002 price. "Very few 20th-century books are seven-figure books," he says, "but this one deserves to be, and I can see it making that."

At a Christie's auction in 2003, a collector paid \$24,000 for just the wrapper—the softcover analog to a dust jacket—of a first-edition *Ulysses*. As for the book itself, Lecky suspects that someone purchased it in Paris and brought it back to the United States bare, lest its telltale blue wrapper catch the eye of customs inspectors.

—SHEILA GIBSON STOODLEY

Bibliotopos, bibliotopos.com; **Christie's**, christies.com; **Raptis Rare Books**, raptisrarebooks.com; **William Reese Company**, williamreese.com

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CLASSING IT UP



THE **MERCEDES-BENZ S63 AMG 4MATIC COUPE** IS WORTHY OF ITS FLAGSHIP NAME.
BY BASEM WASEF



THE TERM S-CLASS is a shortened and anglicized version of *Sonderklasse*, which in German means “special class.” In addition to “special,” the *S* could also stand for “safe,” “serene,” or “sumptuous”—each of which describes the Mercedes-Benz models that have carried the S-Class moniker since 1972, when the company officially applied it to its flagship vehicles. The name has lent the cars an air of superiority over the brand’s more accessible offerings. ➤



-BENZ



The new S-Class Coupe is the first two-door Mercedes-Benz to bear the *Sonderklasse* designation since the 1998 model year, when the S500 Coupe and S600 Coupe (previously known as the 500 SEC and 600 SEC) became the CL-Class (Coupé Leicht, or “coupe light”). The return of the S-Class name promises a special experience for drivers and passengers of the new two-door models, and the S63 AMG 4Matic Coupe, a high-powered variant that the company made available for a test-drive recently in New England, delivers on that promise.

The S63 AMG is the middle of three versions of the S-Class Coupe, which has replaced the CL-Class. It is priced at just under \$161,000. The S550 4Matic Coupe is priced at just under \$120,000, and the top-of-the-line S65 AMG Coupe costs about \$231,000. The S550 Coupe debuted as a concept car in 2013 and was introduced as

a production model last March at the Geneva International Motor Show. The S63 AMG Coupe was introduced a month later at the New York International Auto Show. All three versions are now at U.S. dealerships.

The S63 AMG Coupe displays many of the same design elements as the S-Class sedan, including the delicately tapered lines. But largely because of its shorter wheelbase, the coupe has a more aggressive-looking stance. Though each headlight contains 47 Swarovski crystals—17 for the daytime running lamp and 30 for the turn signal—the car’s overall form is restrained. The two AMG models are distinguished visually from the S550 Coupe by larger mesh-covered air intakes in the front apron with black airflow-channeling winglets. The higher-performance models also have a matte-chrome splitter and rear apron and sharply flared side sills with matte-chrome inserts.

PETER VOGEL



THE NEW S-CLASS COUPE IS THE FIRST TWO-DOOR
MERCEDES-BENZ TO BEAR THE *SONDERKLASSE*
DESIGNATION SINCE 1998.



The S-Class Coupe's cabin is quiet and spacious and not cluttered with an abundance of control buttons and switches.

The cabin of each is appointed with quilted napa leather, Alcantara, and expanses of smooth wood and cool-to-the-touch metal. The metal air vents, switches, and trim pieces are electroplated with what Mercedes-Benz calls a "silver shadow" material, which lends them a three-dimensional appearance.

Like essentially all Mercedes-Benz coupes of the last five decades, the S-Class Coupe models have no B-pillars, providing the driver and passengers with better sight lines. When the frameless doors are shut—gently with assistance from a soft-touch closure mechanism, or with a hard pull and a thunk—they form a seemingly impenetrable barrier of steel and dual-paned glass between the car's occupants and the world outside.

The cabin is spacious and free of the clutter that an

abundance of control buttons can create. Instead of pressing buttons and turning knobs to access the car's electronics systems, you use the Comand wheel or the touchpad located in the center armrest. It can translate finger swipes into letters, numbers, or menu commands. The system works well for some tasks, such as adjusting the scale of the navigation screen, but changing the seat settings or switching audio sources requires a cumbersome scroll through multiple menus.

Like those of the S-Class sedans, the seats of the S63 AMG Coupe are outfitted with cushioning and bolsters that minimize strain on pressure points and encourage all-day driving. The seats are also equipped with a massage function that can include heat to provide a hot-stone-style rubdown. Mercedes-Benz furthers the spa-simulation theme with the S-Class's fragrance system, a standard feature on the S63 AMG Coupe that periodically puffs scents into the cabin from a glove box-mounted atomizer. The company offers four different aromas—Nightlife Mood, Sports Mood, Downtown Mood, and Freeside Mood—or you can fill the atomizer with Acqua di Parma, Chanel No. 5, or any other fragrance you choose. Other features carried over from the S-Class sedan include heated front armrests and door panels and Magic Sky Control, which enables you to adjust the transparency of the glass roof in accordance with the sun's brightness. The car is also equipped with a 13-speaker, 590-watt Burmester audio system.

The S63 AMG Coupe has all the cabin amenities of the S-Class sedan, and like the four-door, it conveys a sense of imperturbability when driven. However, it seems fiercer than the sedan. Powered by a biturbo 5.5-liter V-8



TOP: PETER VOGEL

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THE S-CLASS COUPE DISPLAYS MANY OF THE SAME DESIGN ELEMENTS AS THE SEDAN, BUT IT HAS A MORE AGGRESSIVE-LOOKING STANCE.

that generates 577 hp and 664 ft lbs of torque, the S63 AMG Coupe never feels encumbered by its 4,678-pound curb weight. Its seemingly effortless propulsion can be attributed to the quick- and smooth-shifting 7-speed multi-clutch transmission and the 4Matic all-wheel drive, as well as the hand-built engine, which is adorned with a plaque bearing the signature of the Mercedes-Benz worker who assembled it. The S550 Coupe's 4.7-liter biturbo V-8 produces 449 hp, and the S65 AMG Coupe is powered by a 621 hp 6-liter V-12.

When loafing around town, the S63 AMG Coupe drives obediently and sedately, responding well to gentle nudges of the accelerator. Lay into the throttle, and the turbo-charged fury arrives with a wallop, shooting the car forward with squeal-free acceleration thanks to the 4Matic drivetrain. Though the cabin is lined with plenty of sound-deadening materials, some of the engine noise penetrates the interior. This is intentional, say Mercedes-Benz engineers: Hearing the sound of the engine will remind you that this car has remarkable performance capabilities.

Mercedes-Benz claims that the S63 AMG Coupe can accelerate from zero to 60 mph in 3.9 seconds. (The S550 Coupe's zero-to-60-mph time is 4.5 seconds, and though the S65 AMG Coupe's engine is considerably more powerful than the S63 AMG Coupe's, the car's acceleration time is 4 seconds.) Based on the test-drive, the company's claim seems credible. Because the S63 AMG Coupe is a relatively large car (more than 16.5 feet long and nearly 4,700 pounds), it reaches speed with less drama than

some of the more compact sports cars that are capable of similar acceleration. When picking up speed, it feels more like a Bentley Continental GT or a Rolls-Royce Wraith than a Porsche 911 or an Audi R8.

Though the S-Class is usually associated with a buttery-smooth ride, the S63 AMG Coupe's adaptive Airmatic suspension is biased toward road feel and responsiveness, especially in sport mode; the comfort setting enables more bump absorption and mitigation of other road-surface irregularities. The suspension provides plenty of grip in corners, enabling the S63 AMG Coupe to negotiate turns with a level of agility that is surprising for a car of its size.

The drivetrain's sport mode sharpens the accelerator and transmission responses, though the paddle-shifter response time is not quite as quick as those of some sports cars. Then again, the S63 AMG Coupe is intended more for grand touring than apex carving.

Even after a full day of cruising along the forested back roads of Rhode Island and Massachusetts, the S63 AMG Coupe invited more driving—perhaps an all-night trip down the coast or a jaunt to New York City. Its combination of supercar power and luxury-car comfort is that enticing. As an inheritor of the S-Class name, the new coupe gains a level of refinement and elegance that the CL-Class lacked. It is a worthy complement to the stately S-Class sedan. **R**

Mercedes-Benz, mbusa.com





The advertisement features a dark, geometric background with sharp, angular shapes. A large, ornate necklace made of diamond-set links is the central focus, with a matching diamond-set clasp. Two diamond-set earrings, also in the Cento style, are positioned at the bottom right. The background has a subtle blue and black gradient.

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The Real Deal

By SHEILA GIBSON STOODLEY Photography by ERHARD PFEIFFER

What started for the owners as little more than an investment property—a house in the Malaysian capital, situated on a parcel overlooking the city’s prominent Petronas Twin Towers—now serves as their personal sanctuary, an all-new private residence so resplendently inimitable and utterly inviting that our editors have named it *Robb Report’s* Ultimate Home 2015.

A MALAYSIAN FAMILY bought the Kuala Lumpur property over the telephone, sight unseen. It was intended as a real estate investment, and they knew the neighborhood well. The thing that escaped them initially was what a gem they had acquired. Although the lot’s existing house did not take advantage of the city views (the structure was built before the skyscrapers began to rise), the 0.75-acre site itself offered spectacular vistas of the skyline (above). Ultimately, the owners decided to build a new house (right) to frame the views—the feature that convinced them to make it their main residence. They called on the architect Richard Landry to realize their grand vision.









Face Value

THE OWNERS KNEW what they wanted: something by turns comfortable and glamorous, fit for entertaining more than 100 people every so often and hosting a constant stream of small groups of friends. Their goal was a good-sized home (the main dwelling measures just under 10,500 square feet) that would be nonetheless homey and intimate, and they thought that a Spanish-style exterior (left) like those prevalent in California, where they once lived, would beautifully complement the Malaysian landscape. They also wanted the home to look as if it had been there for decades.

Landry's range impressed them. Having seen examples of his work in his book *Modern to Classic: Residential Estates by Landry Design Group*, they hired him and his Los Angeles-based team, as well as a broader group that included the Kuala Lumpur-based interior designer Jeffrey Wilkes, local builders and landscapers, and metal artisans in California. The project—Landry's first in Malaysia (he has completed others in nearby Singapore)—concluded four years after its start and propelled him to this, his fifth Ultimate Home award.

Certainly Landry's latest win underscores his gift for architectural flourishes and attention to detail; his firm, for example, designed the intricate limestone railings crowning the second level and had them hand-carved in India. Yet his consistent successes stem from his commitment to putting his clients first. "Richard spent so much time trying to understand how we live," says the wife. "He created a home while creating a beautiful house. It's not easy to get those both right."





Natural Beauty

THE FOYER (above) achieves precisely the right balance of elegance and understatement; instead of showily sprawling to the second floor, the staircase is tucked to one side, almost out of sight of arriving guests. The spotlight shines softly but perhaps more dramatically on such spaces as the courtyard (left), whose wall of lanterns takes after a similar lighting array at the Four Seasons Resort in Langkawi, Malaysia, for which Wilkes was an interior designer. Landry designed the lanterns and had Tuscan Iron Works of South El Monte, Calif., produce them in forged iron and custom-bent glass. (The company also created the three lanterns on the courtyard's other walls.) There are 68 lamps in all, a total the owners chose partly because the numbers 6 and 68 represent prosperity in Mandarin. In the glow of the lanterns are antique wooden doors that the owners spotted during a trip to Spain, hand-painted Spanish tiles (around the door in the background), antique French paving stones, and the central tree, intended to suggest that the home had been built around it. The original tree posed a terrible challenge when, despite the best efforts of tree doctors, it died. Lim In Chong, a director of the Inchscape landscape-design consultancy in Kuala Lumpur, recalls "tearing out our hair deciding what to do." Moving a replacement in with a crane was no longer possible by that point. Ultimately, Chong says, a crew carried the second tree in through the front door. Fortunately, that tree has thrived.





Happy Place

FAMILY LIFE FLOURISHES in the living room, which offers many delights. The grand piano, a Steinway, is not merely for show. The homeowners' daughter takes lessons, and talented family friends sometimes come by to put the instrument's keys through their paces. Original artworks, such as the red-dominated, muscular abstract by the Texas-born artist Cecil Touchon, have pride of place, but there is room for playfulness, too. Mingling with the sculptures of Buddhist monks (foreground, left) and the Chola bronzes (behind the far sofa and in the foyer) are colorful cone-shaped Moroccan tagines. The cooking containers direct the eye to the coffee table, which is by the French designer Christian Liaigre, a favorite of both the owners and Wilkes. They admire his clean, contemporary look, which is perpetuated by the side table, also by Liaigre. The horsehair wall covering behind the landscape by the late Indian artist Francis Newton Souza softens the visual strength of the piano and harmonizes with the bronze-olive hue of the Donghia sofas—pieces the owners acquired during a trip with Wilkes to the Milan Furniture Fair. The pale-blue pillows finish the whole. "We used a bit of aqua to go with the bronze," he says, "just for a touch of color."



Inner Light

UNDERSTANDABLY, THE VISUALS in every room could not include the property's enchanting view of the Kuala Lumpur skyline. While one would not expect to see that striking prospect from the basement-level, 1,800-bottle wine cellar (above), the glittering vista's absence from the formal dining room (right) on the main floor comes at first as something of a surprise. Yet the space's Brand van Egmond chandeliers and the wall of lanterns in the courtyard outside are dazzling enough on their own. "We wanted the sparkle of a chandelier, but we didn't want a traditional chandelier," says Wilkes, who believes he and the owners came across the pair of light fixtures in Milan. "The house is all muted stone, not high-polished marble. We wanted more sparkle going on in there."

The chandeliers also provide a subtle visual contrast. They have an airy, snowflake-like appearance, but they hold their own against the sight of the solid, regimented pattern of the iron lanterns beyond. "That's why it works well in our minds. They're their own thing," Wilkes says. "They're so light, visually, like a cloud of sparkle."

The table, by Raintree Accents, features a single slab of *suar* wood and is flanked by Christian Liaigre benches and chairs by Reflex. Tyeb Mehta's *Falling Figure with Bird* graces the French-limestone wall, and the ceiling and floors are French oak. All of the elements combine to create a space that brings pleasure to the owners, whether they are dining with guests or simply walking by on their way to another part of the home.







On the Lookout

THIS PART OF the property, the loggia, is the type of space that almost every Landry design has, no matter what the architectural style is. “It’s about transitioning from indoors to out and being protected from the sun and the rain,” Landry says. “It becomes a great extension to the house.” Here, he placed the loggia at the home’s northeast corner—an ideal spot owing to its horizon view and proximity to a large lawn. This outdoor area seemingly possesses its own gravitational pull, never failing to lure visitors from the dining and living rooms, say the owners. The reddish ceiling beams, which were left in the sun for a few months to attain the desired look, add a feeling of authenticity, while the wicker furniture from Restoration Hardware contributes to the space’s smart but laid-back styling. On the terrace beyond the arch (and also shown on page 88) is an apple-shaped copper urn—an acquisition that ended a minor odyssey for the owners. They had admired a similar urn near the pool of a hotel in India and eventually tracked down its creator in New Delhi. “[The owners and I] love urns,” Wilkes says, describing this one as “a subtle sculpture.”



Forms of Art

THE HOME'S OVERALL AESTHETIC deftly combines elements of comfort and glamour. In the powder room (bottom left)—an emphatically opulent main-floor space with marble floors and walls—highlights include a custom-made Moorish-style mirror framed in dark-stained oak and a vanity counter and custom pedestal sink in bronze oxide by John Underwood, an Australian metal artist based in Phuket, Thailand. Wilkes worked with Underwood on the Four Seasons Resort Langkawi project and recruited him to create this powder room's



standout washbasin, as well as several of the property's ceiling fans. "We often want the sink to be a found object," says Landry. "The shape of this sink is so perfect as a modern interpretation of what you'd find in this type of home."

In addition to the wine cellar (shown on page 96), the basement houses the bar (top left) and the adjoining entertainment room (above). In the latter two, the padded acoustic ceiling provides bursts of color with its vibrantly lit grid.

"[The owners] wanted to have fun, so let them have fun," Wilkes says. His furniture selections range from Holly Hunt table lamps and Minotti lounge chairs to the Désirée sofa. The coffee table is a find of the owners, who discovered it in the Indian state of Nagaland. Etched on a series of mirrored doors (above, at left) is an Islamic pattern that appears elsewhere in the home, most notably on its vents. "It's like a signature pattern for the whole house," Wilkes says.





Dream Vision

IN THE MASTER BEDROOM, the Kuala Lumpur skyline takes center stage thanks to a 13-foot-wide, 8.5-foot-tall window by Steelworks Etc., of Newbury Park, Calif. According to Rob Shattuck, the company president, the piece was logistically difficult to produce. The heavy steel window frame was sent from the States and hoisted into place—before the glass was installed—by a crew of 10 to 12 using ropes and pulleys. Neutral-colored Flexform furniture and Armani Casa table lamps defer to the view, as do the French-oak floor and ceiling.

Intentionally, the bed does not face the jaw-dropping view. The home's design adheres to the principles of *vastu shastra*, which, like those of feng shui, emphasize flow through a given space. Turning the bed toward the skyline would have gone against these tenets. Still, though the home's design generally conforms to the ancient Indian philosophy, it occasionally departs from it. For example, the rug on the master bedroom's floor is a cowskin. The owners, who purchased it from a roadside vendor in South Africa when the World Cup took place there in 2010, note that the cow died a natural death.



Central Perk

A PIVOTAL DESIGN IDEA born of a similar element at the Four Seasons Resort Langkawi, the master bathroom's central back-to-back vanities have as their accompaniment a shared mirror that hangs from the ceiling and is flanked by cast-aluminum pendant lights. "The visual effect of the mirror is to float above [the sinks]," says Landry. "We thought it would make it fun and unique." Capacious drawers in the marble-topped cabinets allow for easy stashing of creams, tubes, pots, vials, and bottles, enabling the owners to conceal the various mundane must-haves that normally reside in

this room of the house. The sinks-as-island configuration is a refreshing change from typical master-bath layouts and delivers a practical benefit in the form of the space's smoother flow. Instead of hyper-polished marble, the walls and floors are clad in two different French limestones. The owners "wanted to sit and look out at the million-dollar view," says Wilkes, so the design team positioned the Bisazza tub before three Moorish-style steel-frame windows by Steelworks Etc. that artfully outline the scene. Illuminated niches flank the tub at its head and foot.



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All Together Now

THE FAMILY ROOM (above) flows seamlessly into the breakfast nook (above at back left) and the kitchen (left, and above at back right), creating an open layout that feels more West than East. According to the owners, this free-form use of space is an atypical approach to design in Asia, where the area would usually be divided into at least two rooms.

It is a family room, indeed. The owners estimate that, when they are at home, someone is hanging out here about 80 percent of the time. And on those frequent occasions they are surrounded by details seen elsewhere in the house. The rugged coffee table by Raintree Accents is made of *suar* wood, the same material used in the formal dining room's table. The table lamp and side table near the ruddy-orange Hans J. Wegner "teddy bear" lounge chair (another Milan Furniture Fair find) are by Christian Liaigre. Aqua hues that appear in the living room repeat here on the sofa cushions and custom ottomans, and the barstools in the kitchen are identical to those in the basement bar. The floor is, again, French oak.

The kitchen, with Spessart oak cabinets by Poliform, is another entertaining hot spot; the custom vent over the stove is large for handling heavy-duty cooking for the family and their guests. The orange-painted recessed ceiling adds an extra splash of color to an already lively space.

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Up and Away

THE UPPER FLOOR HOSTS the more private spaces in the home, including the office and study areas. The study lounge (above), favored by the wife, features a cheerful yellow wall that plays off of shades of yellow in the carpet. French oak graces the floors and ceilings, and the same sort of decorative chengal-wood beams that enliven the loggia also play a significant role here. Hallway-like in nature, the space serves as a natural gathering place for family members; the daughter must pass her mother's work desk to reach her bedroom. Most of the study lounge's furnishings came from the owners, but the space does feature one of Wilkes's triumphs, which is visible at the far end of the room on the right: a Balinese linen closet he designed and had custom made from cinnamon wood. In addition to repelling pests, the closet imparts a heavenly scent to the clothes stored inside. The study room (left), which is mainly the husband's domain, has French-oak floors, chengal-wood rafters, a Linley lounge chair and desk, and an Afghan wool area rug by Nanimarquina. The glass doors open onto a balcony that overlooks the garden.



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Sacred Geometry

“IT’S FUN TO CREATE SPACES that are less typical in people’s homes,” says Landry, and this space for *puja*, or ceremonial worship in Hinduism, allowed him to do just that. Photographed looking upward, the 44-foot-tall tower could pass for a contemporary version of a campanile, a freestanding bell tower. Indeed, the owners wanted it to have an airy, almost church-like feel. Situated on the home’s private second floor, conveniently adjacent to the stairs, the space has a prominent exterior, which is shown on page 91; it is the tower with the lightning rod

jutting from its top. Distinguishing its roof are glazed ceramic tiles made in Los Angeles. (The remainder of the home’s roof is covered in modern barrel-shaped tiles imported from Italy.) A metal girdle that conceals the air-conditioning unit—a crucial amenity in the hot, humid climate of Malaysia—separates the bronze-leaf decorative ceiling from the bronze-leaf niches. “If you go in to pray,” says Wilkes, “you don’t want to melt.” The metalwork features the Islamic pattern that appears on the mirrored doors in the entertainment room (see page 100).



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Secret Garden

THE ESTATE'S TREES are largely indigenous, with one notable exception: The palm trees near the house (shown on the preceding page) are *Washingtonia robusta*, a type that thrives in California and Mexico. Certainly Malaysia offers its own vast botanical wealth, but the landscaping at this home serves the same purpose as it does most anywhere else—to beautify and to safeguard privacy. The owners wanted something lush but not overly manicured—controlled chaos, in other words. With that in mind, and with keen attention to Landry's design, Inchscape's Lim In Chong chose flora with a Spanish-Californian feel. "I tried to work with the architecture so we would have a harmonious whole," he says.

Two firecracker heliconias, whose broad leaves recall those on a banana plant, flank the stairs to the pool. Nearby, a frangipani tree twists into view, and a second such tree stands next to the detached guesthouse (above, at left). The overall effect is that of a cohesive East-meets-West masterwork, one firmly planted in Malaysia, where the owners can lounge by the pool in peace. **R**

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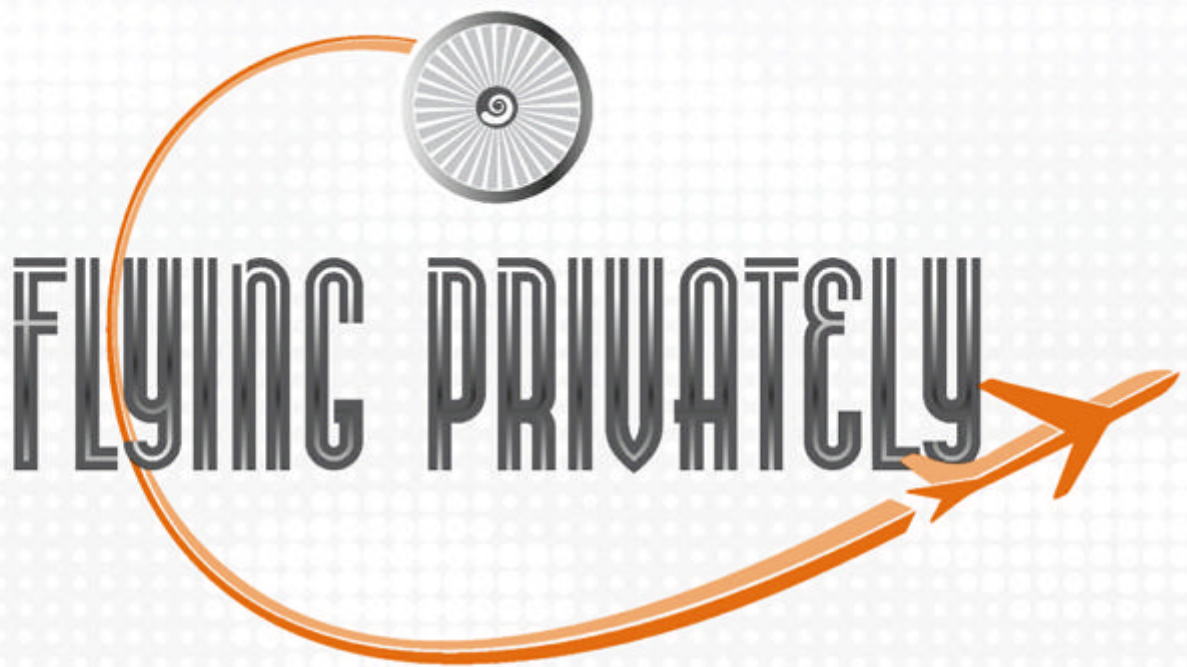
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A century later, business aviation continues to be driven by fast-changing technology and market forces. Its evolution is moving at a fast clip, though business models established over the last few decades are here to stay. Fractional ownership, on-demand charter, jet card membership, aircraft management, and other programs continue to drive the industry forward.

After several years of moderate growth, the pace seems to be accelerating again. A recent survey by AR/GUS said that business-jet activity in 2014 had reached prerecession levels, with growth across multiple categories. The industry watchdog also forecast stronger growth through the first quarter of 2015.

The leader in fractional ownership, NetJets, reported higher sales last year and has taken delivery of dozens of new business jets under its \$17.6 billion plan to acquire 670 new aircraft in the

next decade. Sentient, which invented jet card membership in 1999, saw its sales rise by 25% last year. ACASS, the world's largest provider of pilots and crew, continues to expand its suite of aircraft sales and management programs. Its new slogan, "Own Your Journey," reflects how the company empowers its clients through custom solutions.

XOJET, with a fresh business model combining the best of fractional and on-demand charter, has also

seen strong growth with its client-focused Access programs. Textron Aviation, which has the world's largest number of business jets, saw delivery of those business jets increase by 12% last year and notes encouraging signs this year. Delta Private Jets also had a banner 2014: Its jet card sales were up 17%, while charter sales rose 68%.

Jet Aviation, a General Dynamics company, is adopting new client-focused technologies that let customers access and control their aircraft management programs via the web. Skyjet, a Directional Aviation company, is also investing in technologies that will make booking an on-demand charter flight as seamless as using a smartphone.

Across the industry, aviation firms are reporting sustained growth. With the continuing evolution in programs, services and technologies, there has never been a smarter, more compelling time for flying privately.

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FLYING PRIVATELY

NETJETS has long led private aviation by maintaining the industry's largest, newest, and most diverse fleet of business jets. The Berkshire Hathaway company, which pioneered fractional ownership in 1986, is again pushing the industry forward with its \$17.6 billion commitment to acquiring 670 aircraft over the next decade.

NetJets has worked very closely with its clients and aircraft manufacturers to develop customized Signature Series for six jet types it has commissioned. The company has already taken delivery of about 40 new Phenom 300s, 10 Challenger 350s, and 20 Global 5000 & 6000 business jets, the first installments in the Signature Series.

"We've used years of client feedback and customer flying profiles to determine optimum configurations for each jet type," says Patrick Gallagher, head of U.S. sales for NetJets. "Each of our Signature Series interiors is unique to NetJets. We were very meticulous about the design, combining the most efficient use of space with every creature comfort. We also included sophisticated technology for our clients."

The new Challenger 650, for instance, has business aviation's most advanced cabin management system, largest-in-class HD monitors, audio-video on demand, and Bluetooth integration. Industry-leading connectivity capabilities allow passengers to text or phone on their personal mobile devices that operate through the 650's satellite communication system. The advanced-technology component also extends into the cockpit, where pilots benefit from the state-of-the-art Bombardier Vision flight deck.

NetJets is the launch customer for the Challenger 650 and will begin to take deliveries this summer. "The 650 is built on a proven airframe that is considered one of the most reliable business jets in the sky. But Bombardier did a total redesign of the interior, and the Signature Series version includes our specifications."

The widest-in-class cabin promises to set new standards in comfort and space, with dimensions that include an interior seating length of 20.5 feet, a cabin height



of 6.1 feet, a width of 8.2 feet, and a baggage volume of 115 cubic feet. "The height and width of the cabin are the same as on some larger business jets," says

"THERE IS NO OTHER CABIN EXPERIENCE LIKE THIS"

Gallagher. "There is no other cabin experience like this in this class of business jet."

The Challenger 650 was also designed to have the lowest operating costs in its class. Its range is 4,394 statute miles, with a speed of 528 mph. The range allows nonstop flights for six passengers between the East and West Coasts, from New York to London, or from Miami to São Paulo. The optimized GE engines also deliver higher thrust for shorter takeoff capabilities, increasing access to many more destinations.

"The 650 is really one of the leading value propositions in private aviation today,"

says Gallagher. "But we're able to extend its value even more for our clients. We have firm orders for 25 of the 650s, with options to purchase 50 more. With that redundancy of aircraft, we have the ability to respond to our clients much more quickly."

NetJets' decades-long experience with large-cabin jets is also an advantage, not only on North American flights but for clients with international travel needs. "Flying abroad is different from flying domestically," says Gallagher. "Our fleet and operations in Europe and the Middle East give us an advantage over competitors who primarily operate in the U.S. Our geographic reach makes us a truly international operator."

Eventually, the Bombardier Global 7000 and Global 8000 models will join the NetJets Signature Series as its two ultralong-range aircraft.

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The Manhattan-based company is launching an iPhone app that serves up real-time pricing for on-demand charter flights. And for international travelers, the new Global On Demand program provides access to large-cabin and long-range business jets, eliminating repositioning fees on many trips.

"Our goal with these new features is to continue to simplify and increase on-demand charter opportunities for our clients," says Greg Richman, Skyjet's president. "The app will help clients book private jet travel seamlessly on their iPhones. At the same time, we provide the expertise to help our clients navigate a highly fragmented charter market."

On Skyjet's homepage is a simple question: "Where are you headed?" Once a user provides trip information, Skyjet will create a custom quote, which can be reviewed, approved, and paid for online. Near the bottom of the page, flights with empty-leg availability scroll across like a stock ticker. This time-sensitive approach explains why Skyjet is one of the most respected names in private aviation.

Skyjet recently began a new chapter in its history after three other Directional Aviation companies—Flexjet, Sentient Jet, and Flight Options—moved their on-demand charter businesses into Skyjet. In addition to the Manhattan office, Skyjet has regional operations in Dallas, Boston, and Cleveland.

"We now have an exceptionally experienced team in different regions who understand the intricacies of the charter market," says Richman. "We also have a long, successful history working in the international market, which requires a different expertise that we offer to our clients. We launched the Global On Demand program to capitalize on that expertise and to provide our clients with access to more destinations across the globe." The company has a long track



record of organizing road shows as well as international charters for financial institutions and other corporate clients.

Beyond its team of 35 aviation veterans, Skyjet works with only the top 25% of U.S. charter operators. Its vetting process, which includes background checks on pilots and aircraft as well as inspections by staff, is considered one of the most rigorous in private aviation. Skyjet also works with an independent safety board,

"TIME AND TIME AGAIN, OUR CUSTOMERS ARE TURNING TO US TO PROVIDE A FLAWLESS TRAVEL EXPERIENCE"

composed of former FAA and NTSB experts, to develop best safety standards.

"Safety is a buzzword in the industry that doesn't always mean much, but we've institutionalized best practices around it," says Richman. "Reaching the highest standards—be it safety or service—is one of our core values."

Skyjet remains vocally committed to simplifying the charter process, fostering aviation expertise within the company, and providing clients with access to a full range of business jets. "We combine these values every day to deliver a seamless charter

experience for our clients," says Richman. "Our goal is to simplify the booking process by moving further into the digital space and eliminating as much paperwork as possible. But we also have the expertise to deliver a polished, customized trip, including sorting out the many details involved in a successful charter."

Trip managers, who oversee each flight, are tasked with ensuring that every part of the flight, from ground transport to catering, goes smoothly. "This extra layer of service differentiates us from most brokers," says Richman. "It also assures a proactive approach to every flight. Clients appreciate this, especially if plans deviate. This level of dedication has helped us retain many clients over the years."

Armed with this strategy, Skyjet has seen continued success within the private-jet charter marketplace. "Time and time again, our customers are turning to us to provide a flawless travel experience," says Richman. "We've worked hard to establish that level of trust, and as a leader in the private-jet charter industry, we'll work even harder to preserve it."

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FLYING PRIVATELY

SENTIENT JET

, a Directional Aviation company, has seen significant growth for the last four years. But 2014 was particularly strong, with sales up 25%. "Last year was a record-setting year for financial performance," says Andrew Collins, president and CEO of Sentient Jet. "We had the best activity in seven years and we saw it heat up to prerecession levels in the fourth quarter. We expect this year to be just as strong."

The company that invented the jet card model in 1999 has more than 4,000 active Cardholders. Newcomers to business aviation and refugees from other companies that did not deliver on promises have moved to Sentient, attracted by flexible programs, fast accessibility to the full spectrum of business jets, and substantial benefits through its partners. Sentient has also developed one of the best customer-service programs in private aviation.

"Service sounds like such a cliché, and every company claims the highest levels," says Collins. "But considering that most of our new clients come from referrals from our existing clients, you can see that we take service very seriously."

Best hospitality practices were introduced to the company by executives who joined Sentient from the Four Seasons, Starwood Hotels, and other leaders in luxury accommodations. Detail-oriented protocols assure not only impeccable customer service but efficient communications with the clients. In February, Sentient also relaunched its Cardholder portal with new features. It allows clients to view statements and print invoice details, view scheduled flights and flight history, update their profile and flight preferences, schedule upcoming travel, and discover the latest benefits. "The portal also allows clients to meet account directors," says Collins. "It's a seamless resource for Cardholders that adds control, time savings, and transparency."

Sentient has also upgraded client benefits with the release of its "2015 Exclusive Benefits Guide for Sentient Cardholders." The brochure features 22 compelling offerings from partners,



including Hertz Platinum status, free nights at some of the world's finest five-star hotels and resorts, and private tours and tastings at six of Napa Valley's leading wineries.

OUR GOAL IS TO OVER-DELIVER ON SERVICE AND BENEFITS

"We've added 10 new and very compelling offerings this year," says Collins. "These partnerships are important as we continue to expand the service portion of our business. Our goal is to over-deliver on service and benefits. We don't take shortcuts, especially with our clients."

There have never been any shortcuts on safety, the foundation that Sentient was built on. "Some of our competitors promote safety ratings from third parties, but we are truly fact based," says Collins. "We've built up a

proprietary vetting system that analyzes information from both the FAA and operators that we've been working with, some for as long as 15 years." Sentient's software sifts through millions of pieces of data right after the initial booking, and then senior managers hold detailed flight reviews before the scheduled flight.

Sentient's Chief Safety Officer—a role that is unique in private aviation—has final determination over whether a flight is delayed or canceled, even if it inconveniences the client. "We won't compromise on safety," says Collins. "We've invested millions into developing the industry's best practices, and only work with 20% of the top Part 135 charter operators in the country. Safety is ingrained into every level of our organization."

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FLYING PRIVATELY

ACASS's new tagline, "Own Your Journey™," is more than a clever marketing slogan. The Montreal-based firm (with a truly international reach) has used the philosophy behind this mantra for the last 21 years to develop a unique role in the world of business-aviation support.

When ACASS launched in 1994, it focused on crew support. Early clients included Xerox, Bombardier, Carnival Cruise Lines, TAG Aeronautiques, and other multinational corporations. It has since grown to become the world's largest provider of business-aviation pilots, crew, and maintenance engineers, with a database of more than 16,000 professionals from all over the world.

Aircraft sales, aircraft management, entry into service, ferry and delivery, and training have all become equally important components of ACASS's full-service business model. "Because we offer a comprehensive range of related services, we can provide turnkey solutions, expertise, and insight that few others can match," says Andre Khury, ACASS's president and CEO.

The controlled, organic growth of the company circles back to the corporate values behind "Own Your Journey." "We didn't set out with a master plan or timetable for expansion," says Khury. "Our growth has always been defined by our clients' needs. Every department and service was born from a specific need related to acquiring, selling, owning, operating, or staffing a jet."

Ultimately, though, Khury sees a deeper, more figurative sense to "Own Your Journey" that goes beyond clients' daily operational needs. "Our clients are leaders and visionaries who came to business aviation to make it easier to achieve some pretty lofty goals," he says. "Our expertise, personnel, and relationships allow us to create custom solutions that give them more control and more reliable results. In that way, we are helping them move forward with their journeys."

This customer-centric approach has seen ACASS expand in both established and



emerging markets. It has regional offices in the United States, Mexico, the Middle East, Africa, and a recently opened European

"WE CAN PROVIDE TURNKEY SOLUTIONS, EXPERTISE, AND INSIGHT THAT FEW OTHERS CAN MATCH"

office in the Republic of San Marino. ACASS is the first and only company to hold an Air Operator Certificate (AOC) in the San Marino registry.

ACASS has developed strong market penetration in every region of the world,

but its experience is particularly noteworthy in the Middle East, Russia, Africa, Southeast Asia, and South America. "ACASS flawlessly supports our requirements and ensures I'm in the air when I need to be" says Aliko Dangote, president and CEO of the Dangote Group. "They are a resource I would not want to be without."

Khury believes that continually adapting to client needs remains key to ACASS's future growth. "We've evolved to become what our clients most need us to be," he says. "That will continue to shape our evolution."

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FLYING PRIVATELY

XOJET. Few inventions inspire as much awe as a hot new-model supercar or a sleek, gleaming business jet. *Robb Report* readers and XOJET clients both understand: Whether behind the wheel of a new Porsche 918 Spyder or seated in a transcontinental Challenger 300 jet, the travel is definitely the best part of the trip.

XOJET has teamed up with *Robb Report* as an Official Jet Partner for its 2015 Car of the Year award, a partnership that gives *Robb Report* Club members special benefits with the nation's third-largest aviation firm.

"Our mission is to be the advisor and service provider of choice for the industry's most sophisticated clients," says Bradley Stewart, CEO of XOJET. "We take an extremely client-centric approach, which includes our philosophy of 'making it personal' for our members. Customer service is paramount, but part of that service includes finding the most cost-efficient ways for clients to fly."

XOJET's on-demand charter model allows full access to its own fleet as well as an additional 1,000 vetted airplanes from XOJET's long-term partners. The San Francisco-based firm owns and operates the nation's largest floating fleet of Challenger 300 and Citation X business jets. Flights are booked on a trip-by-trip basis, without any deadlines or restrictions.

The company's new "Take Command" marketing campaign is reflected in programs that give clients flexibility in their air travel and access to an industry-leading benefits program. "We've invested \$650 million in a new fleet and infrastructure and then structured our programs so that our clients can take charge of their flying experiences," says Stewart. "We're a true one-stop shop for any trip, large or small, on a full spectrum of business jets."

XOJET's Preferred Access and Elite Access programs have been designed with transparency and flexibility to deliver cost efficiencies, including a no-questions-asked refund policy. The 95% client retention rate for the Access programs gives an idea of how popular they are.



"Our clients like our super-midsize jets, with the creature comforts you'd expect," says Stewart. "They also appreciate that we deliver guaranteed lift, even on peak travel days. We offer different aircraft types without penalty, something that is difficult to do in other programs."

"THE MOST MEMORABLE TRIPS [OUR CLIENTS HAVE] EVER TAKEN"

Like *Robb Report*'s Car of the Year event, XOJET partners with some of the world's most respected luxury agencies and resorts to provide clients with unforgettable experiences. "We use the phrase 'traveling beautifully' to describe what we and our partners offer clients," says Shari Jones, XOJET's chief marketing officer. "Many clients tell us that they're the most memorable trips they've ever taken."

Those trips include (courtesy of Butterfield & Robinson) an insider's tour of the Masters Tournament in Augusta and exclusive winery tours of France's most revered vineyards. The Yellowstone Club provides one of the most select stays in the heart of the Montana highlands. Element Lifestyle, another partner, routinely gets XOJET clients through the closed doors of New York's hottest new restaurants and blockbuster movie premieres.

Of course, the best way to travel is by private jet, especially with XOJET's "Take Command" philosophy. "We empower our crew to make unofficial purchases like travel guides or birthday cakes," says Stewart. "These gestures can help turn a routine flight into a special trip."

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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FLYING PRIVATELY

JET AVIATION. Since its foundation in 1969, Jet Aviation has grown into the one of the world's largest aircraft management, charter, FBO, MRO and completions businesses. The General Dynamics company continues to evolve, with new technology platforms and programs that support its broad customer base.

Jet Aviation's comprehensive scope of services, not to mention its rock-solid parent company, have been a draw for clients. But as more clients are choosing to purchase their own aircraft, it is important that they choose a management company that is forward thinking and anticipates their operational needs.

"We've seen a significant pickup in our aircraft management programs," says Don Haloburdo, vice president and general manager of Jet Aviation Flight Services. "The owners aren't all new to private aviation. But they see this as the right time for full aircraft ownership. They also view us as the company that can provide a seamless transition from initial acquisition to full management of their aircraft."

The entrance of entrepreneurs, who often own successful tech companies, has prompted Jet Aviation to modify its technology platforms to reflect a fast-changing business culture. Jet Aviation's new secure Client Gateway provides instant access to each client's financial data.

"We understand that aircraft are significant expenditures, so we wanted to take the guesswork out of the financial end," says Haloburdo. "We designed the Client Gateway like a simple online banking system, so clients can reconcile every transaction. The portal gives them both immediacy and transparency in their financial dealings with us."

Jet Aviation has much broader plans for the Client Gateway. It is now working on modifications that will deliver much faster and wider control over many operations. "We're looking at multiple ways to streamline



communications between clients, pilots, crew, and Jet Aviation," says Haloburdo. "Our investments in these technology differentiators are significant, but they're

**"A SEAMLESS TRANSITION
FROM INITIAL ACQUISITION TO
FULL MANAGEMENT OF [OUR
CUSTOMER'S] AIRCRAFT."**

also necessary as we move forward. We see this as the new way to interface with our customers."

Jet Aviation's history has always been about developing new platforms by anticipating trends. The company has developed multitiered aircraft management

programs to offer flexible solutions for owners, with the same baseline of quality.

The JetStart program, which develops flight departments for companies entering private aviation, simplifies complex regulatory and operational processes. Jet Aviation's Completions Monitoring program also ensures that owners gain their new aircraft on time and on schedule.

"We know there are many options in the market, so we're constantly looking for ways to better serve our clients," says Haloburdo. "Going forward, it will include incorporating the most advanced technology. It sets us apart now, but it'll be even more important for the future."

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Call 877.207.6546 or visit jetaviation.com



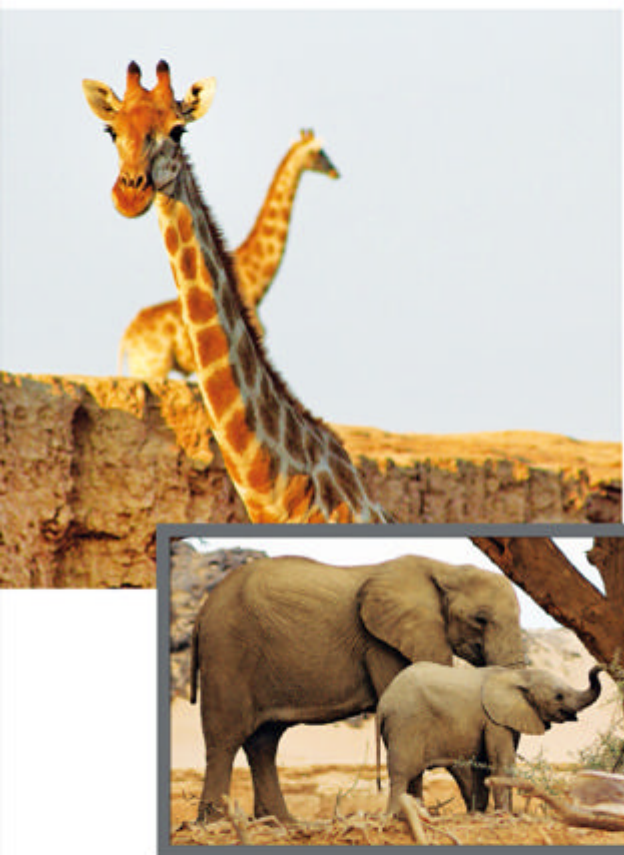
Inside Out

A NEW CAMP NEAR NAMIBIA'S SKELETON COAST LAYS THE FRAMEWORK FOR A ONE-OF-A-KIND SAFARI EXPERIENCE. **BY BRUCE WALLIN**

Wilderness
Safaris' Hoanib
Skeleton Coast
Camp borders one
of Africa's least
visited—and most
extraordinary—
national parks.

DR. PHILIP “FLIP” STANDER bounds ahead of his guests, eager to share a discovery he made on the grounds of Namibia's Hoanib Skeleton Coast Camp. The Cambridge-educated zoologist—who has been studying the Namib Desert's elusive lion population for more than 15 years—has a knack for uncovering the area's hidden treasures. The current source of his excitement, however, is neither a cat nor any other living creature, but rather the vestiges of a nomadic people who roamed this barren stretch of northwestern Namibia thousands of years ago.

“If you look around on the ground you can find shards of pottery,” Stander says as he surveys a jumble of rocks, his intense blue eyes peering out from behind a bushy beard the



Desert-adapted elephants, giraffes, and other wildlife thrive along the Hoanib River, despite annual rainfall of less than an inch.

color of the desert's famed dunes. "Here's one now."

Delicately, he reaches for a smooth piece of red clay, maybe 2 inches at its widest, and turns it over to reveal a black painted side. Several more items—including a larger fragment complete with a handle—present themselves within seconds, suddenly revealing this speck in a sea of sand and rock as a trove of ancient artifacts. "It's everywhere," Stander says, placing the original shard back on the ground in the precise position he found it. "But you have to look closely."

In Namibia, a country of striking extremes and fascinating subtleties, the doctor's advice is sound. Situated north of South Africa and west of Botswana on the African continent's southwestern tip, Namibia is an inhospitable land of bone-dry deserts and gray and ghostly Atlantic shores. The country is twice the size of California but, with only about 2.3 million citizens, has roughly 6 percent of its

population. The residents represent at least 11 different ethnicities, among them the San people of the Kalahari, the seminomadic Himba in the desolate northwest, and the German-, English-, and Afrikaans-speaking descendants of European colonizers.

Almost half of the land in Namibia is protected as private reserves and parkland, including Namib-Naukluft National Park, where some of the world's tallest sand dunes stretch for more than 60 scorching miles before crashing into the frigid Atlantic Ocean. Namibian parks are home to Africa's Big Five animals, rare mammals including the coastal-dwelling brown hyena, more than 600 species of birds, and Cape fur seals, humpback whales, and other marine life. And yet, as many regular visitors are quick to point out, one should never expect in Namibia a Serengeti-style safari marked by an abundance of wildlife.

"It is not a first-time destination," says Will Jones, founder and managing director of the United Kingdom-based safari company Journeys by Design. "It is for those who have had their wildlife fix elsewhere and are looking for something different, to push out the frontiers a little bit more. Namibia definitely ticks that box."

Jones, who grew up in six African countries, counts Namibia among his "Under the Skin" destinations, a collection that also includes Zambia, Rwanda, and other less-traveled locations. Namibia in particular offers "a much more specialist, unfettered safari experience," he says. "It's about spending more time in fewer places, about drilling down into the micro wildlife world—the insects, the lizards. But it's also about your big cats, your elephants, and how they adapt to life in the desert. It's all there, it's just a little harder to find."

While Namibia has traditionally catered to the self-drive safari market, Jones has seen the level of accommodation in the country improve dramatically over the past decade. Still,

he says, "the main luxury item that Namibia offers is space—that ability to feel like you're completely off grid, that sense of solitude."

Nowhere is that feeling more pronounced than in the country's Skeleton Coast National Park, a 4 million-acre expanse that is said to be one of the least visited parks in all of Africa. Last August, the secluded region became relatively—though by no means easily—accessible with the opening of Namibia's newest luxury lodge, an exclusive fly-in camp that offers an appropriately singular safari experience.

HOANIB SKELETON COAST Camp is set within the 1.1 million-acre Palmwag Concession, on its northeastern border with the national park. Only reachable by light aircraft, the eight-tent property is one of 11 camps in Namibia operated by the South Africa-based Wilderness Safaris, whose lodges near the dunes of Namib-Naukluft, in the northwestern Himba lands, and in other remote regions helped establish a Namibian luxury safari circuit.

At Hoanib, the eight accommodations flank a main lodge, all constructed with heavy-duty canvas tops stretched tightly over an artful configuration of poles. Stylishly simple interiors feature works commissioned from the wildlife photographer Graham Springer, whose black-and-white prints—an oryx standing on a distant sandy ridge, a lone giraffe loping over a dune—emphasize the surrounding terrain as much as, if not more than, the wildlife.

The landscape is certainly worth highlighting. Rugged granite peaks jut from a parched gravel plain that drops gradually from the camp's elevated perch toward the Hoanib River, a sandy bed that is devoid of water almost year round. Springs underneath, however, support an ecosystem in which deep-rooted ana and acacia trees sprout from the riverbed's floor,



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offering sustenance to the desert-adapted elephants, giraffes, oryx, springbok, and baboons that wander its twisted channels.

The camp's location is about 25 miles from the coast, a distance covered almost entirely by windswept dunes. Excursions to the coast require a morning drive over the dunes and floodplains, and a 15-minute return flight in the afternoon. The trip is included for guests staying three nights or more at Hoanib, but it is by no means guaranteed. Flights are contingent on the Skeleton Coast's fickle weather patterns, which frequently produce a viscous and vicious fog that barrels in from the shore, enveloping miles of inland dunes in a matter of minutes.

The phenomenon—a by-product of the hot desert clashing with the Atlantic's cold Benguela Current—is feared by sea captains and airplane pilots alike. (More than 1,000 shipwrecks line the Skeleton Coast, offering one explanation for its name.) But the fog serves a purpose beyond frustrating would-be travelers. In an area where the average annual rainfall is less than an inch, the soupy conditions provide hydration for reptiles, birds, and other animals, with dew accumulating on the leaves of plants to form miniature pools of water.

The desert's underground channels also create the occasional water source for wildlife, springing up to form striking blue oases amid the vast dune fields. A drive through the dunes to one such wellspring is a highlight of the camp's trip to the coast, which also might include visits to a seal colony, a rusted iron shipwreck, and a ranger station packed with whale bones, pickled snake remains, newspaper clippings about long-ago wrecks, and other Skeleton Coast curiosities. The outing—which a change in weather can cut short at a moment's notice—is unique among safari experiences in Africa, offering a sharp contrast and a fine complement to Hoanib's equally compelling excursions closer to camp.

AFTER REPLACING HIS potsherd, Stander heads back toward camp, leaving his guests and their guide to wander down to the Hoanib River. Their path travels first over a granite rise—which hides the den and paw prints of an African wildcat—then

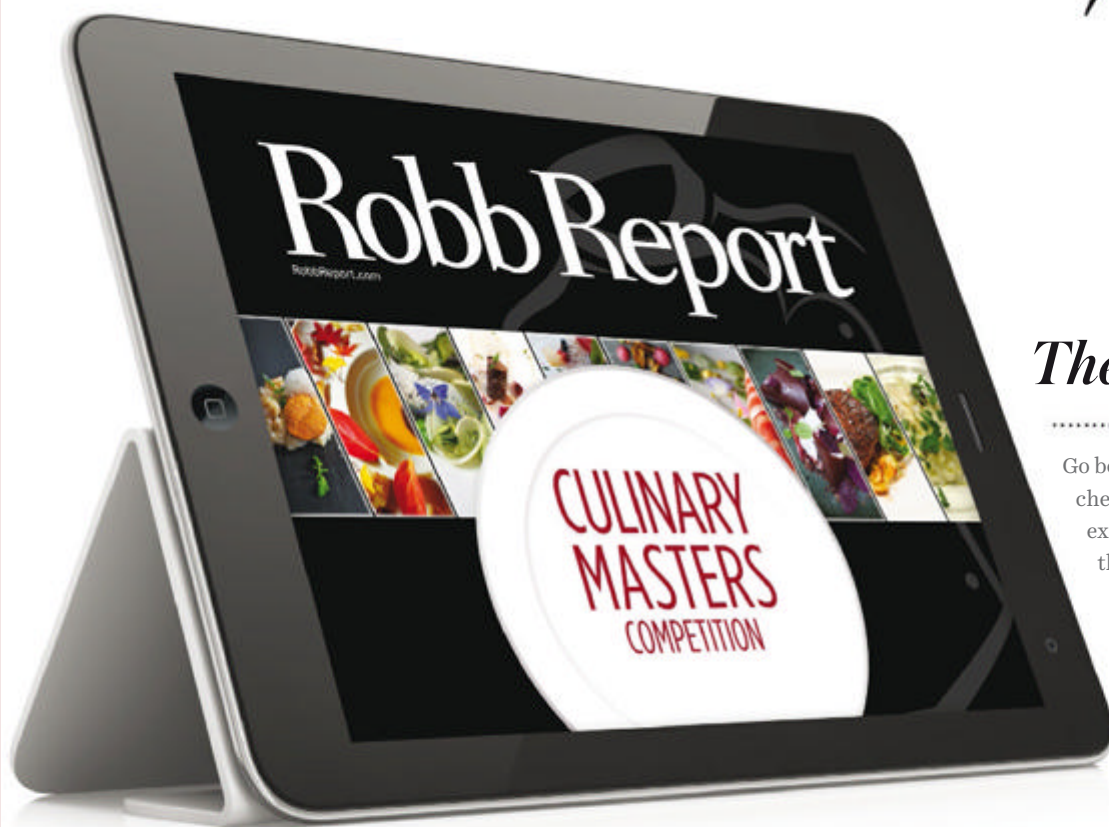
down an elephant-worn trail to the riverbed, where a safari vehicle is waiting. A short drive downriver reveals the pachyderms that presumably carved the path, a party that includes three newborns. Each subsequent bend seems to produce additional elephant sightings; giraffes, too, begin to appear out of the thin desert air. A herd of ostriches—maybe five adults and 13 chicks—sprints at top speed at the sight of the vehicle, scattering over the nearby dunes like a pack of velociraptors.

The riverbed's high concentration of game is an anomaly in these parts and can be an irresistible draw for the desert's limited predator population. According to Stander, who is now based at Hoanib but spends weeks at a time in the open wilderness, the Namib is the only place in the world where lions live in such extreme conditions. (It is also the only place where free-ranging lions come down to the coast and, on occasion, hunt seals.) The cats were all but eliminated from the desert in the 1980s, shot or poisoned by poachers and farmers. In the late 1990s, however, "reports started coming in of tracks in the desert," Stander says. "I surveyed the area and found between 20 and 23 lions."

That number has risen to more than 150 today, a still infinitesimal figure in the context of the 31,200-square-mile Namib. "A typical lion's range in East Africa might be between 50 and 100 square kilometers," Stander says. "A desert lion in Namibia might have a range of 2,600 to 34,500 square kilometers." The desert's low lion density means that the chances of seeing one are slim. The odds increase greatly, however, when you have a sharply focused doctor in residence.

The next morning, at the outset of a game drive to the Hoanib River, an urgent call comes in over the radio. The guide on the receiving end of the call—who has not seen a lion since arriving at camp a few weeks earlier—suddenly swings his vehicle around and speeds off in the direction of a nearby valley, where Stander is waiting with his latest discovery. **R**

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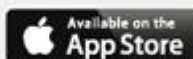
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ONCE CONTENT WITH BUILDING WOODEN LOBSTER BOATS, HODGDON YACHTS IS NOW UP TO SPEED ON CONSTRUCTING CUTTING-EDGE HULLS. **BY SHAUN TOLSON**

Made of pre-preg carbon fiber, *Comanche* showcases Hodgdon Yachts' ability to build a hull that is extremely light yet still strong.

THIS SUMMER, THE captain and crew of *Comanche* will try to win the Transatlantic Race and establish the 100-foot vessel as the world's fastest mono-hull sailing yacht. The event, part of the Atlantic Ocean Racing Series, will begin June 28 in Newport, R.I., and follow a 3,200-mile course to south Cornwall, England. The race has been run once before, in 2011, when *Rambler 100*, a New Zealand-built super maxi (90 feet or longer), crossed the finish line in 6 days, 22 hours, 8 minutes, and 2 seconds.



Comanche, which is skippered by Ken Read, a two-time U.S. Rolex Yachtsman of the Year, reached speeds of 32 knots in the Sydney-to-Hobart race.

Comanche launched in October and two months later placed second in the Rolex Sydney Hobart Yacht Race, an annual contest that covers the sometimes treacherous 723-mile route between the Australian and New Zealand ports. The yacht is visually striking, with black sails and a black-and-red hull. With one of the largest carbon-fiber hulls of its kind, *Comanche* also represents the state of the art in hull-construction technology. The yacht is owned by Kristy Hinze-Clark and her husband, Jim Clark, the 71-year-old cofounder of Netscape, and it was designed by VPLP Design and Guillaume Verdier, two French firms that specialize in racing yachts. *Comanche* was built—remarkably in only about 13 months—by Hodgdon Yachts, a sixth-generation, family-owned company in East Boothbay, Maine, that three decades ago rejected technological advances in hull construction in favor of the traditional techniques and materials for which Maine boatbuilding is renowned.



When Tim Hodgdon bought the company from his father, he changed the name and moved away from lobster boats altogether.

“*Comanche* is a rocket ship,” says Tim Hodgdon, the company’s CEO. “The boat was designed to break records and win races, and under the right circumstances, it will be the fastest boat, far and away.”

Hodgdon’s second-floor office overlooks the Damariscotta River, not far from where the waterway empties into the North Atlantic. The walls are hung with photos of *Comanche*

and other yachts that the company has completed in recent years. Many of the vessels—traditional sloops, ketches, and commuters, as well as modern-looking motor yachts built for the Office of Naval Research and Special Forces—feature hulls made of advanced composites. Cutting-edge construction has been the boatyard’s focus since Tim Hodgdon took the helm.

The Hodgdon family has operated a boatbuilding business in Maine for almost 200 years. It has undergone numerous name and specialty changes during that time, but it is still recognized as the oldest continuously operating boatyard in the United States. When Tim Hodgdon joined the company as a full-time employee in 1979, his father, George “Sonny” Hodgdon, was in charge. Sonny had operated a different boatbuilding business a decade earlier that produced its own designs and yachts for Alden and Herreshoff. As the 1970s approached, fiberglass construction was becoming popular, but Sonny did not want to work with that material, and he wanted to operate a smaller business. So he sold the company and established a new one, G.I. Hodgdon Co., which built traditional plank-on-frame lobster boats.

When Tim Hodgdon bought the company from his father in 1984, he changed the name to Hodgdon Yachts and moved away from lobster boats altogether. “My vision of where the company needed to go, it was something more sophisticated,” he says.

Over the next 15 or so years, the company worked regularly with the naval architect and designer Bruce King, whom Hodgdon describes as “the grandfather of modern classics.” Through those collaborations, Hodgdon Yachts built a number of large sailing vessels, including the 124-foot *Antonisa*, which launched in 1999, and the 154-foot *Scheherazade* (now *Asolare*), which launched in 2003. Each of these yachts featured

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Halfway through the construction of *Scheherazade*, Hodgdon began to diversify the company. First he launched a defense-composites division, then he added three more divisions: One builds custom tenders, another designs yacht interiors, and the third provides yacht maintenance and repair services. Perhaps most significantly, Hodgdon has focused the company on using advanced composites—carbon fiber, Kevlar, and foam-core Nomex—to build exceptionally fast motor yachts and sailing yachts.

The company has built two advanced-composite, high-performance motor yachts in recent years, but nondisclosure agreements prevent it from discussing those projects. *Comanche*, which reached speeds of 32 knots during the Sydney-to-Hobart race, is a high-profile showcase of Hodgdon Yachts' capabilities.

The construction method used to build *Comanche* is known as pre-preg, which is short for pre-impregnated composite fibers. It is a complex and delicate process that involves heating the carbon-fiber material that forms the hull to about 200 degrees Fahrenheit. To build the yacht, the company had to invest heavily in its own facilities. The boatyard's main bay, which was built in 2001 and measures 160 feet long, 50 feet wide, and 49 feet high, was outfitted with numerous ovens that are instrumental in the construction process. The largest oven is 110 feet long, 36.5 feet wide, and 20 feet tall and is equipped with multiple propane heaters that can produce more than 1.5 million Btu.

The use of carbon fiber is not limited to *Comanche's* hull. "Every sail is carbon fiber. Everything you see above the deck is carbon fiber," says *Comanche's* racing skipper, Ken Read, a two-time United States Rolex Yachtsman of the Year and the president of the sail-making company North Sails Group. "It's far more like a racecar than you would ever imagine. The shapes and sizes and tolerances that these builders are building to now—it's nothing shy of unbelievable."

Hodgdon notes that *Comanche's* ability

to fly across the water is not a function of construction materials alone. "Just because you build something out of an advanced composite doesn't mean it's going to be light if you don't engineer it properly," he says. "It's not going to be lightweight if you build it out of carbon fiber and it's not optimized." Much of *Comanche's* hull is said to be constructed from composite materials with a honeycomb core, enabling the hull to remain strong while further reducing its weight. Throughout the yacht, Hodgdon's team and the yacht's designers

*Hodgdon has focused
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used the minimum amount of material needed to keep *Comanche* structurally sound. The yacht also benefits from a canting keel, which can be swung to the windward side to counteract the heeling force of the sail. And *Comanche* is unusually wide—twice as wide as many of its super-maxi competitors. The width can be a problem in light winds—which slowed *Comanche* during the Sydney-to-Hobart race—but it provides stability in moderate to heavy winds.

Just as light winds can hinder a sailing yacht's progress, it would seem that a region's association with traditional designs and traditional building techniques could be an impediment for a cutting-edge company that is based there. That is not necessarily so, says Hodgdon Yachts' chief financial officer, Don O'Grady. "We're proud of the tradition of building boats in Maine. It's been going on for hundreds of years, and people still value that quality," he says. "But we're offering a different perspective on what that means." **R**

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Who are your art heroes?

They range from da Vinci and Michelangelo right to Picasso, Matisse, Keith Haring, and Andy Warhol. All of these were, in their respective times, great catalysts of change and made a huge impact on the art world. I admire Michelangelo's skill as a sculptor. It's hard to believe that a human being was able to create such perfection—and so long ago, when there were not so many tools like we have today. I love the colors used by Matisse, I appreciate the energy of Keith Haring, and I love Andy Warhol's American icons, how he captured them, their egos. It

really told the story of a nation. It is only passion, love, and discipline that can make someone create something so spectacular that people adore for generations.

What are some favorites from your art collection?

My collection consists of drawings from Picasso and Matisse, and several great Andy Warhol prints. I still remember the first piece of art that I ever bought—at Le Meurice in Paris. It was a beautiful drawing of my star sign [Libra] by Dalí, and I bought it with all the money I had. It's still one of the most treasured pieces in my collection. Another one of my favorites is a huge 80-by-96-inch piece by Frank Stella.

You also collect watches.

Yes, I have a 1963 Rolex that I bought in London, and it's really special to me because it's from the year that I was born. It was the first luxury watch that I bought myself. I also have this great Andy Warhol watch that he designed for Movado. It's a beautiful piece; it's several watches all glued together, all black-and-white photographs of buildings in New York City. I also have a lovely limited-edition Hublot watch that's made with diamonds and Brazilian emeralds that was given to me by the brand for my contribution to this past FIFA World Cup. I've actually just designed a watch for Hublot that will be launched soon.

Are you a car collector as well?

Yes, one of my favorites is my Bentley that was the last Arnage model to come out of Crewe before the brand was taken over by Volkswagen. Other than that, I have a yellow 1968 Mustang, a Mercedes SL500 from 1989, and a yellow Ferrari 360. Then there is a 2014 Rolls-Royce Ghost.

Tell us about your work with children's charities.

My focus is on education—it can change lives, communities, and countries. One of the initiatives I am involved with in my own country is the World Childhood Foundation founded by Queen Silvia of Sweden, who is half Brazilian. We serve abused, abandoned children, many of whom are street children. As a father, this cause is especially close to my heart. Happy Child is another wonderful organization dedicated to the education of at-risk Brazilian children; they're especially active in my hometown of Recife. I recently created a special collection inspired by the queen's first trip to Recife in 1968, and proceeds went to Happy Child. Here in the U.S., I am very proud to be on the board of Best Buddies International, an organization that teams a volunteer “buddy,” or mentor, up with kids who have intellectual and developmental disabilities. Most recently, I hosted a paint party with Best Buddies and Miss Universe contestants. We even created a special-edition print commemorating the occasion, the sales of which will be donated to the Best Buddies foundation. **R**

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